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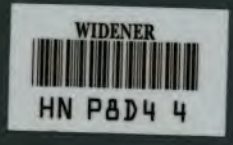

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PRICE ONE SHILLING.

What Protection Does

FOR THE

Farmer and Labourer.

A Chapter of Agricultural History.

BY

I. S. LEADAM, M.A.,

BARRISTER-AT-LAW; LATE FELLOW OF BRASENOSE COLLEGE, OXFORD.

Author of "Farmers' Grievances"; "Agriculture and the Land Laws," &c.

FIFTH EDITION.

Revised and Enlarged.

CASSELL & COMPANY, Limited:

LONDON, PARIS & MELBOURNE.

1893.

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APRIL 25, 1939

DEDICATION OF THE FIRST EDITION.

To

JAMES HOWARD, Esq., M.P.

FOR THE COUNTY OF BEDFORD,

CHAIRMAN OF THE FARMERS' ALLIANCE,

A FAR-SEEING AND STRENUOUS ADVOCATE OF THE FARMERS' TRUE INTERESTS,

These Pages are Inscribed.

November 9th, 1881.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION.
(REVISED.)

THE continued and accelerated fall of prices, the consequent but more gradual decline in rents and the incipient reductions of wages since the year 1881, when this pamphlet was first published, have naturally increased the unrest and dissatisfaction of the commercial and industrial world. From these feelings the Fair Traders have reaped what harvest they can lay claim to. As though the events of history had never happened or had never been recorded, they appeal to the hopes of those whose profits they promise to raise, or to the discontent of those who have fallen behind in the race of competition. To the manufacturer and farmer they offer the bait of increased returns to capital, to the labourer a rise in wages, unmindful of the fact that to their fathers and grandfathers the same hopes were held out and the same promises falsified. It is intelligible that to men unversed in abstract speculation *a priori* reasoning is not always convincing, and it has been observed with truth that all the dialectics of Cobden might have been fruitless but for the stern lesson impressed by the Irish famine. I rest the case against Protection to agriculture, therefore, in the main upon experience, though I endeavour to reinforce experience by showing the necessities out of which it issued, and by deducing the moral which it points. "Experience," said Benjamin Franklin, "keeps a dear school, but fools will learn in none other, and scarce in that." My hope is that the penal discipline of their

forefathers may be a sufficient lesson for the existing generation.

The two former editions of this pamphlet have received some not unfriendly criticisms from Protectionist Farmers. "It is impossible," says one critic in a letter which was communicated to me, "to follow him in his argument that, because prices were augmented by Protection, Farmers sustained a loss instead of a gain, as he begs the question all the way through. In the first place, Rents were not fixed on the assumption that wheat would make the maximum price, but by supply and demand." It is a curious commentary on this statement that another Protectionist Farmer, writing about the same time, says, "Sir Robert Peel made a *promise* that wheat should never be under 56s. a quarter"—a striking indication of the interpretation assigned by Farmers to the anticipated effects of a Protective tariff. But, indeed, so far have I been from begging the question, that to any one who will take the trouble to read the evidence of the Farmers themselves it is clear to demonstration that Rents were fixed in expectation of a steady maximum. See in the evidence before the Committee of 1821 that of Mr. Custance (p. 3); before the Committee of 1833, of Mr. Oliver (p. 51); of Mr. Hope of Fenton Barns and of Mr. Howden (pp. 61–3) before the Committee of 1836. I heard not long ago from a landed proprietor a confirmatory tradition on the side of the Landowners. He told me that he remembered his father saying that as soon as the Corn Law of 1815 was passed the steward was sent round the estate to raise the Rents. Unless human nature is greatly changed both in Farmers and Landlords, which will scarcely be contended, the phenomenon which regularly recurred under the Corn Laws would to a certainty reappear under a new one. And how little human nature has changed on the Farmer's side is shown by the illusory imaginings in which one of

my critics still indulges: "I must say it would be well to legislate now so as to keep corn up to 56s. a quarter and meat up to 8d. a pound, and thereby enable the Farmers to live and pay fair rents."

Others, again, of the Protectionist Farmers with whom I have come in contact have adopted a *rôle* of self-sacrificing patriotism. Starting with the assumption that it would really be advantageous for the country to double its wheat area, they have criticised my conclusions as to changes in the distribution of wealth which would assuredly ensue. "It is invidious," they have argued, "to insist upon the moral certainty that the Landlords will appropriate the entire gain. A beneficial result will have been attained which in the long run extends to the whole community. Men of real public spirit will, therefore, abstain from inquiries which have only the effect of 'setting class against class.'" They forget, however, that their initial assumption is more than questionable. It certainly cannot be shown from the point of view of practical economics that an artificial extension of the wheat area is desirable. If such an extension were economically profitable, it would take place without legislative forcing. The military argument is disposed of by our experience of the time when Napoleon was master of the wheat-exporting granaries of the Continent. But even were their assumption justified, the analysis of the changes in distribution arising out of Protection is not out of place. The main argument addressed to Farmers and Labourers is based on nothing else than prophecies that the consequence of Protection would be to put more into their pockets, to distribute to them a larger share than before of the national wealth. This is the challenge thrown down by the Protectionists themselves, and this challenge I take up. It is too late, then, for them to retreat from their chosen position in a cloud of evasive heroics.

There is another class of argument of which I have said nothing in the text, as not being strictly germane to my topic. It is asserted by Fair Traders, and the doctrine is embraced by Lord Randolph Churchill in his Fair Trade as distinguished from his Free Trade speeches, that the imposition of import duties would give a healthy stimulus to the revenue. But investigation of the effects of a tariff upon revenue shows its imposition to be followed in general, if not by an absolute decline, at least by a decline in the rate of increase. Some who have pretensions to rank in political life, like Mr. Chaplin, seriously suggest, in the face of the everyday experience of commercial men, to say nothing of common sense, that the duties are paid by the foreign exporters. The simple commercial transactions which I have selected for illustration on p. 90 is sufficient refutation of this obvious fallacy. Others who think that the country will be relieved by a tariff seem to suppose that duties are paid by miracle. "He omits," says one of my critics, "one important item, viz., the relief of taxation by the import duty. If a duty of 5s. a quarter on wheat and 4s. a quarter on barley and maize, and 3s. a quarter on oats were imposed on importations at the present time, something like £8,000,000 per annum would be received and might be applied to national purposes." Be received —yes, but from whom? My friend, like Lord Randolph Churchill, who is the first Chancellor of the Exchequer since Addington untinged by Political Economy, would do well to read that simple chapter of Bastiat on "That which is seen and that which is not seen." The transfer of them from one pocket to another may be a relief, as this pamphlet shows, to one class of the community, but it cannot be a lightening of the national burdens.

August 31, 1887.

PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION.

DURING the months that have elapsed since the publication of the third edition, the cry of the Fair Traders has become louder. In November last a meeting at Oxford of more than a thousand Conservative associations from all parts of the country carried by an overwhelming majority resolutions in favour of commercial reaction. The most remarkable incident of this declaration is that, since Lord R. Churchill of late abjured Protectionism, it receives no overt encouragement from any of the Party leaders. Indeed, the politicians who are responsible for it can scarcely be said to take place even in the second rank. Nevertheless, an agitation so popular with the local Party wire-pullers cannot fail to be the cause of considerable embarrassment to the Government, as well as to individual Conservatives who hesitate between Party ties and reluctance to commit themselves to a doctrine, the realisation of which must, as they know, result in acute distress among the mass of the population.

One notable and constant characteristic of Protection has already developed itself. A few years ago the Fair Traders professed themselves desirous, as a rule, of nothing more than a five-shilling duty on wheat, and this rather by way of retaliation on the United States than as in itself of advantage to the community. On pp. 64–66, and generally throughout the pamphlet, I have argued on the assumption that this was their

demand. Nor have I departed from that assumption in this edition. But I observe that expectation is whetting the edge of Protectionist rapacity. We have not to wait for the appetite which partial fruition invariably brings. Our Protectionists, like the ancient Sibyl, are already raising their terms. On the 8th of December (1887) the "National Association for the Preservation of Agriculture and our other Industries" held a demonstration in St. James's Hall. Their chairman, after picturing the supposed ruinous consequences of Free Trade, remarked amid cheers that "a 10s. 6d. duty would have saved us from all these disasters, and would not have raised the price of wheat above 50s. a quarter." A month earlier, at a meeting of the "National Fair Trade League," one of its leaders, Lord Stanley of Alderley, declared in favour of 10s. When once this factitious hunger is excited, 50s. a quarter is as little likely to satisfy as 80s. in 1815–28. Protectionists, by whatever name they call themselves, are in the very nature of things like the daughters of the horseleech, "crying, Give! give!"

The Farmers, except where neighbourhood to great towns induces reflection upon political possibilities, are largely worked upon by Protectionist promises. Not that they can altogether shut their eyes to the mass of evidence proving the injurious effects of Protection to themselves as a class. The secret spring of their inclinations is to be found in the liberal dealings with their tenants of the majority of English Landlords, and the conviction which each man cherishes that, however those upon the properties of other owners may suffer, he will himself escape. At a discussion introduced by me at a meeting of a local Chamber of Agriculture, this argument was advanced with reference to a well-known Protectionist Landlord, who was not, it was urged, likely to take advantage as against his tenants of the opportunities which, as was admitted, a Corn Law would

put into his hands. As though a contingency so precarious and isolated as the forbearance of exceptional individuals could furnish an adequate basis for a revolution in national economy, or justify the cultivators of the soil in exposing their fortunes as a class to assured and final ruin!

There are other Farmers, especially among the shrewd and independent Scots, who interpret with a more discerning eye the causes and consequences of the present distress. "Do you not think," writes a well-known farmer of Midlothian, who ascribes his losses to the competition of high rents rather than to the competition of low prices, "Do you not think that some means should be used to bring before the nation the real cause of British agriculture now requiring Protection, *i.e.*, that in the past the conditions under which it has been carried on have been so unreasonable?—I may say, so ridiculously unreasonable?" "Farmers in my district," he adds, "have been ruined and expatriated after they had shown that they could carry on British agriculture profitably without Protection." In the judgment of these, among the best Farmers in the kingdom, the mischief for which this illusory remedy is sought is of home-growth. The practice of renting tenants on their improvements, and of refusing them security of tenure, has weakened their capacity to withstand severe pressure. To these evils my correspondent desires that the Cobden Club should direct public attention. For my own part, I can plead that I have long been sensible of them. I have never been content to meet Protection with a simple *non possumus*, but whether through the Farmers' Alliance, or as a candidate for Parliament, I have invariably urged upon farmers that "No Protection" was not the last word of Free Traders. The Farmers' interest lies not merely in desisting from the vain pursuit of a chimera, but in concentrating effort upon the substantial

improvements of their condition which are really within their grasp.

By a strange inconsistency, those who figure as adherents of Protection generally declare themselves opposed to Socialism. Yet between Protection and Socialism, whether the Socialism come from above or from below, from Ministers of State or a revolutionary party, there is an absolute identity of principle. The only difference lies in the application. Both Socialists and Protectionists alike fancy that the stroke of a pen can create national prosperity. Both believe that Ministers can beneficially direct the common course of commercial transactions. Both look to a redistribution of wealth through the agency of the State. It is no wonder that in countries where Protectionism is the accepted creed Socialism flourishes. There is only one point of difference between the two. Socialism invites the intervention of the State to mulct the rich for the benefit of the poor, the few for the many. Protection invokes it to tax the poor in favour of the rich, the many for the few.*

I. S. L.

January 1, 1888.

* Since writing the above, there has come into my hands an instructive pamphlet on "The French Corn Laws," by M. Yves Guyot, deputy for the department of the Seine. It is translated by Mr. J. W. Probyn, and published by the Cobden Club. M. Guyot remarks upon the French Elections of 1887, which turned chiefly on the question of further Protection to agriculture: "The Protectionists in reality made only one speech, in which they reiterated in every kind of form that the State should guarantee to the proprietor the certainty of his rent. These same Protectionists are very indignant when certain Socialists demand that the State should guarantee a certain minimum salary for their work. It is, however, exactly the same theory."

PREFACE TO THE FIFTH EDITION.

THE exceptionally scanty harvest of 1892, and the fall of prices which rendered the deficiency of yield more severely felt by the farmer, have given fresh life to the Protectionist movement. This found its opportunity in the National Agricultural Conference held in London at the beginning of December, 1892. Recent political changes had concurred to favour the Protectionist party, who had for six years been unwilling to embarrass a Conservative Ministry. But an active agitation for Protection has long been the policy of the Conservative party in opposition. Differences did, indeed, disclose themselves among the delegates to the Conference. While some, especially such as live among the great centres of population in the north of England, turn for a remedy to reforms of land tenure and greater freedom of cultivation, the majority, especially those from the country districts of the south, remain strongly favourable to Protection. Upon these the lessons of history, if indeed they have ever been their study, have been lost. Yet the enthusiasm of the landlords, and the frank avowal of one of them that "he spoke as a ruined landowner," might reasonably have awakened suspicion that the farmers' pockets were not the first thought in the minds of all. Clearly, unless the "ruined landlords" are permitted by raising their rents to appropriate the whole of the

proposed duty, since not even the most sanguine anticipate that the duty will be heavy, their fortunes are not likely to be re-established. In that event what becomes of the farmer?

The difficulties incident to a division of the spoil were prudently postponed by the Conference. But the Protectionist leaders are sensible that they have to face the difficulty of converting the agricultural labourer to a crusade for a rise in the price of food. In an interview accorded to a representative of the *Evening News*, and published in that paper on December 12th, 1892, Mr. J. Lowther expounds the plan of the Protectionist campaign—"Raise prices of produce to a point that pays for production* and the result would be that the diminished wage would be augmented . . . . Improved prices, as the result of Protection, would increase the wages of the labourer." Unfortunately for this dictum, "improved prices, as the result of Protection," were, as the following pages show, accompanied by the lowest possible level of wages to the labourer. And while the level of wages was low, the taxation upon those wages imposed through the agency of general Protective duties was considerable. The wages, in short, were less and went less far. Upon this important feature of the Protective system the leaders of Protection to Agriculture are judiciously reticent. They use language which conveys that while the labourer will enjoy some advantage from the enhanced price of the commodities sold by his employer, he will, in his capacity of consumer, enjoy the benefit of the cheapness of Free Trade. But Agricultural Protection, as the Sheffield Conference of Conservatives showed, is only one branch of a system designed to raise the price of commodities all round, including those of which farmers and labourers are purchasers. What guarantee then has the labourer that,

* As to this point see the inquiry of 1814, page 5 *infrà*.

assuming his wages to be raised as an indirect consequence of duties upon food, the rise will not be more than counterbalanced by the increase in the price of the other articles of his consumption?

Discerning that mere empty promises, such as those of Mr. J. Lowther, are not likely to attract the labourer to a policy involving immediate and evident sacrifices, another Protectionist leader, Sir E. Sullivan, endeavours to prove Mr. J. Lowther's dictum by reasoning.

In a letter to the *Morning Post* of December 12th, 1892, Sir E. Sullivan bases his argument upon the maxim that "in every industry wages for labour are regulated by the value of what the labourer produces." From this he infers that when wheat is cheap wages are low, and when wheat is high wages are high also. But the maxim is only true with limitations. Where the labouring class is highly organised, it is able to secure a share of the produce, limited by the current returns for risk and profits of the employer. On the other hand, where the supply of labour is great and practically unrestricted by organisation, the employer can dictate the terms, and the "iron law" of Ricardo asserts its tendency. In the case of the agricultural labourer, his poverty, his isolation, and his dependence render effective union extremely difficult, if not impossible. His wages, therefore, do not vary as the value of produce. Were an Agricultural Labourers' Union able to dictate terms, as Sir E. Sullivan suggests, the farmers' profits would be encroached upon from below, and the farmer, in his turn, would be less able to pay the increased rent which follows upon a Protective duty. Latent as the antagonism of interests may be so long as Government abstains from intervention, it is instantly stirred up to life by a Corn Law. No sliding scale of wages would satisfy an efficient Agricultural Labourers' Union, for the labourers would argue, and with perfect justice, that

their right to intercept the whole of the value added by a duty was as good as the right which the landlord claims to base upon it a rise of rent. The farmer, exposed to attack on both sides, would retaliate on the labourer as the weaker party, and seek to save his profits by paring down wages. In this he would be encouraged by the landlord, whose object in promoting Protection would be entirely frustrated were a rise in wages to consume the fund out of which he contemplates a rise in rents. And that these inferences are not idle imaginings is shown by every page of the experiences here recorded. Low wages, low profits, and high rents are the inevitable issue of Protection to agriculture.*

An argument has recently been invented by the Protectionists calculated to allay the apprehensions of a rise in price, whether felt by the agricultural labourer or by the general consumer. With an heroic defiance, not merely of economic probabilities, but of every-day experience, they maintain that a rise in the price of a raw material does not involve a rise in the price of the manufactured product. They allege the case of France, where the free importation of bread does much to nullify the action of the Corn Law. Yet even in France, as M. Guyot has shown,† their assertions are untrue. According to them the great offender is the middleman, especially the baker, who maintains a normal price for bread irrespective of the cost of wheat or flour. All that Protective duties would do then would be to reduce the profits of the baker, while leaving the consumer untouched.

The question may well be asked why, if the bakers of this country can effectively control such a giant monopoly, they should not, in the event of a Corn Law, so raise their prices as to retain their customary rate of

* For the conditions under which dearness of corn may be accompanied by higher wages see below, page 74, note. They are not such as to commend themselves to the labouring classes.

† *Infrà*, p. 30, note.

profit? The public would in that event be not less but more at their mercy, since the unrestricted importations of the raw material which, according to economists, tend to promote competition in manufacture, would be cut off. The basis of monopoly is limited supply. And if there be any foundation for the opinion of the French mayors,* that the bakers for their own profit combine to establish an artificial price, the logical consequence is the action they have taken to declare an Assize of Bread. It is obviously the duty of a Government to combat evils which its intervention has brought into being. If then Protection should be adopted in this country, the Assize of Bread must again, as inseparable from the Protectionists' position, find a place upon the statute book. From this step to that of municipal bakehouses is, as mediæval economic history and the experience of modern Marseilles alike show,† a natural and necessary transition. We shall then find ourselves immeshed in the elaborate system of fixing prices and wages which, whatever its justification in the Middle Ages, has been gradually discarded as incompatible with the conditions of modern industrial development. For the only alternative to a paternal despotism will be a social anarchy to which the darkest days of the old Corn Laws will present but an insignificant parallel.

As a matter of fact the statements of the Protectionists as to the price of bread in this country are for the most part pure fictions. Mr. James Lowther is represented as saying, in the interview already cited, that "bread is no cheaper to-day, when wheat stands

* See p. 79, note.

† In February, 1893, the municipal authorities of Marseilles, unable to agree with the bakers as to the official price of bread, occupied the bakeries with the police and military, and with the assistance of supplies from the Government depôts, themselves undertook to provision the city with bread. The issue of the struggle is that the bakers have capitulated, probably with the intention of recouping themselves in the manner indicated by M. Guyot.

at 28s. a quarter, than when it stood at 40s." Similar language is used by Lord Winchilsea, who is endeavouring to enlist the agricultural labourers in a Union of which the but partially avowed object is the restoration of the laws under which, seventy years ago, they were rendered desperate by starvation.* But the agricultural labourers are probably better informed than the gentlemen who would persuade them at the same time that their bread is too cheap and not cheap enough. Letters have appeared in the papers from some of the great bakers of London effectually disposing of Mr. Lowther's delusion. "In April, 1891," writes one of them,† "the price in London of the best household bread, made of the best London-made flour, was 8d. per 4lb. loaf, the price of the flour was 40s. per sack; to-day the price of the best household bread is 6½d. per 4lb. loaf, the flour costing 30s. per sack. In these cases both the bread and the flour are the very best, no better flour being made in England. A fall of one halfpenny per 4lb. loaf is equal to a fall of 4s. per sack in flour. It is evident that bread having fallen 1½d. per 4lb. loaf in the last two years, and flour only 10s. per sack, the baker is getting, instead of a greater profit, a smaller by 2s. per sack than in 1891." The Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society, Woolwich, was selling bread in January, 1893, at 5d., and in the autumn of 1892 at 6d. a quartern, the difference being represented by a fall in the price of flour. ‡

Another of the Protectionist leaders—Mr. Howard Vincent, M.P.—subsequently endeavoured to improve upon Mr. Lowther's judicious generalities by specific

* The basis on which this Union was founded was to carry out the objects of the Conference of December, 1892, of which the principal was the reinstatement of Protection. After some attempts to conceal this, Lord Winchilsea, its founder, has definitely declared for differential, *i.e.*, Protective, duties (*Times*, January 20th, 1893).

† Mr. W. Neave Hill in the *St. James's Gazette*, January 10th, 1893.

‡ Statement by the Manager, see *St. James's Gazette*, January 14th, 1893.

statements as to the comparative prices of bread in England under Free Trade and in France under mitigated Protection. According to Mr. Vincent, the price of bread in Paris is equivalent to about 7½d. the 2 kilo. loaf, whereas in London the price is 7½d. the 4lb. loaf, which is two-fifths of a pound lighter than the French loaf. To this Mr. Mundella, M.P., President of the Board of Trade, replied as follows:—

"Board of Trade, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.
"*February 18th*, 1893.

"DEAR MR. HOWARD VINCENT,

"I regret that the pressure of business has prevented me from replying earlier to your letter of the 11th inst., which was delivered to me by your secretary on the afternoon of Sunday, the 12th. I understand your contention to be that working men pay 7½d. for a 4lb. loaf in England, whereas bread, equally good, weighing 2 kilos., is sold in France for from 75 to 80 centimes, and you call in question my statement made in the Debate on the Unemployed. Permit me to say that you are entirely mistaken, both as to the statement made by me and as to the price paid by the English workman for the 4lb. loaf.

"The facts are very simple, and may be briefly stated as follow: On the 11th and 12th of August last I presided over Group C of the Royal Commission on Labour, and examined a number of masters and workmen engaged in the baking trade in various parts of the United Kingdom. The evidence showed that in the north of Ireland the price of bread at that date was 5d. for the 4lb. loaf, and that that was the rate generally paid by workmen throughout the north of England also; that the finest bread was sold as high as 6d., but that both first and second quality were in some cases sold at 4½d. and 5½d. respectively; that in Staffordshire, where it is

weighed over the counter, it was sold at a 1d. per pound, or 3½d. for the 3½lb. loaf, and 4d. for one of 4lbs. The London witnesses gave evidence that bread by makers of good reputation—such as Chibnall, Jasper, and others—was retailed at 5½d. the 4lb. loaf in London. A few days later I went to France and found that the price generally charged for bread of second quality was 80 centimes for a loaf of 2 kilos. I made inquiries at the bakers' shops, of the workmen, and of the peasants whom I saw carrying home their weekly supplies, and found that the invariable price quoted was, as I have said, 80 centimes for 2 kilos.

"I do not wish it to be understood that this bread was less wholesome or less nutritive than our English bread at the lower prices which I have quoted, but owing to its colour and texture it would be objected to by English workmen, and even by the residents in our union workhouses. I know from long experience that there is nothing that the working classes, even the very poorest, so much object to in bread as the discolourisation and close texture which was characteristic of the bread which I examined in France. You are altogether in error in the statement that the price paid by working men in London for the 4lb. loaf is 7½d. It is not improbable that such is the price charged for fancy bread in the neighbourhood of Grosvenor Square to the inhabitants of that aristocratic locality, but working men are not accustomed to reside in such fashionable quarters, or to buy bread of such a description.

"I have taken some pains to ascertain what were the prices generally ruling last Monday morning. I find that the price of the 4lb. loaf of excellent quality delivered at the door in Kensington was 5½d. The price in Woolwich and Chatham was 4½d. and 5d., and Neville's bread of the very finest quality was delivered for my own table at 6½d. From inquiries made in

Sheffield, I find that the Sheffield Union, like the Yorkshire people generally, bake their own bread, that it is made with flour of excellent quality, and costs 1d. per lb., and that this is the general cost throughout Yorkshire and elsewhere, where it is customary for the people to bake their bread at home. In Sheffield, where the bread is purchased from the baker, the price to-day is 5d. I believe in the foregoing I have given you the very outside prices that are being paid. I have heard of much lower quotations. At Spalding the Union has recently contracted for bread, which I am assured is of very good quality, at $2\frac{3}{4}$d. the 4lb. loaf; and that $4\frac{1}{2}$d. is a very common price in working-class neighbourhoods in the large towns. A recent Foreign Office report from Italy gives the price in the third week in December, 1892, as ranging from 7d. per 4lb. loaf at Milan to $9\frac{1}{2}$d. at Rome. You will thus perceive that in Protectionist countries the price of bread is from 25 to 50 per cent. dearer than it is in this country. I propose to send this correspondence to the press on Monday.

"I remain, etc.,

"A. J. Mundella.

"C. E. Howard Vincent, Esq., C.B., M.P."

Mr. Mundella's statements were corroborated by letters from experts in the *Times*, of which two examples will suffice—

"PRICE OF BREAD.

"To the Editor of the *Times*.

"Sir,—Referring to the letters of Mr. Howard Vincent, M.P., and the Right Hon. A. J. Mundella, the President of the Board of Trade, on the price of bread to the working classes, I have investigated the subject at various times during the last thirty-four years, and the following carefully prepared statement may be interesting to many of your readers. It is, excepting the first item,

extracted from the last paper read by me on the subject at the meeting of the British Association at Manchester in September, 1887. I have not yet completed the returns for 1893, but, as far as I have gone, the prices quoted by Mr. Mundella appear to be correct.

"The average price of bread of good quality, delivered over the counter for cash, in 1887 was 4¾d. per 4lb. loaf; in 1859 it was 5½d., in 1849 it was 6d., and in 1839 it was 8½d. per 4lb. loaf.

"An average workman's family has been taken at five persons, consisting of himself, his wife, and three children, and their expenditure in bread has been as follows:—

						d.	s.	d.
1893	Average workman's family in bread, 8 4lb. loaves @					5½	= 3	8
1887	,,	,,	,,	,,	,,	4¾	= 3	2
1859	,,	,,	,,	,,	,,	5½	= 3	8
1849	,,	,,	,,	,,	,,	6	= 4	0
1839	,,	,,	,,	,,	,,	8½	= 5	8

"I am yours obediently,

"DAVID CHADWICK.

"36, Coleman Street, London, E.C., Feb. 21.

"P.S.—The price to-day of the best household bread at the counter in one hundred of the best bread shops in London is 5½d. per 4lb."

"TO THE EDITOR OF THE *TIMES*.

"SIR,—With reference to the published correspondence concerning the price of bread between the President of the Board of Trade and Colonel Howard Vincent, M.P., may I be permitted to point out that the last-named gentleman is quite mistaken in stating that the fall in the average price of wheat during the past twelve months has had no appreciable effect upon the price of bread?

"As chairman of one of the leading bread companies, I am able to state, from the experience of a close con-

nection with the trade, that the price of best bread at this time last year was 6½d. per 4lb. loaf, against 5½d. at the present time. This reduction of 1d. is equal to 7s. 9d. per sack of flour, whereas the average price of the latter is only 7s. 3d. less than it was at the same time last year. This will clearly prove that the reduction in the price of bread is even greater than the reduction in the price of flour; and this is the case with all the principal producers of bread in the metropolis.

"I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

"FREDERICK BEDDOW.

"2, Gresham Buildings, Basinghall Street, London, E.C.
"Feb. 22."

Another of the clients whose cause is pleaded by the Protectionists is the taxpayer. Production, they tell us, is crippled by taxes. If just so much duty is levied on foreign wheat and flour as represents the total of internal taxation, imperial and local, the home producer will be placed upon a level with his competitor from abroad. Further, the general burden of taxation will be relieved by the amount of these duties.

This proposal lands its advocates in a dilemma. If the imposition of duties involves, as the Protectionists assure the farmers, a corresponding rise of price, it is the consumer and not the foreigner who will pay the whole. The reasons for this will be found on pages 79–80 of the text. It is the English taxpayer who will have fresh burdens added to those he has to bear. Should any Protectionist doubt this conclusion, he has only to look at the history of the M'Kinley tariff.

Contemporaneously with these proposals in the supposed interest of the farmer, the Protectionist whispers words of comfort to the general public. No rise in price, he assures—as we have seen—the consumer, would follow the imposition of a duty. But if this proposition be true

the proposal ceases to have any attraction for the British farmer; indeed, he would be the worse off, as the enactment in his interest of an illusory remedy would surely estrange from him public sympathy.

It was observed by Sir W. Harcourt in the debate on the Address (Feb. 7, 1893) that "there is nothing more remarkable in the history of these committees on agricultural distress than the fact that it has always appeared to the party who has suffered from that distress that the first and best remedy for it was what is called in America "soft money." It is outside the scope of this work to enter into the question of Bimetallism. But since the plea for Bimetallism as a cure for agricultural distress is now urged upon historical grounds in the House of Commons, the soundness of this foundation is pertinent to the present inquiry. In the earlier part of the same debate (Feb. 6, 1893), Mr. Everett, M.P., alleged that "it was the abundance of inconvertible notes between 1797 and 1815 which led to the high prices and the great prosperity."* There is room for much astonishment at the resurrection in the House of Commons in 1893 of the ancient superstition that the printing-press can create prosperity! The specific contention of Mr. Everett was long ago demolished by Tooke in his "History of Prices," and the years selected by him, when the circumstances are scrutinised, lead to entirely opposite conclusions. To take the first period Mr. Everett adduces. In 1798, 1799, and 1800 there were deficient harvests. There was coincidentally an increase in the Bank circulation. But at this period Bank of England notes were actually at a gold premium, so that the fertilising properties of inconvertible paper were altogether inoperative. The rise in prices can well be accounted for by the de-

* The substance of the following argument on Agricultural Depression and Currency appeared in two letters contributed by the author to the *Economist* newspaper of February 18th and March 4th, 1893.

ficient yield, especially if Gregory King's law* be borne in mind. But the events of the years immediately following enable us, by the application of the Method of Difference, completely to refute Mr. Everett's inference. From 1801 to 1803 the harvests were moderately productive. Wheat fell from an average of 119s. 6d. in 1801 to 69s. 10d., 58s. 10d. and 62s. 3d. in 1802–4.† Now had bank notes been the original cause of the high prices, the further issues of bank notes which took place during those years would have raised the previous prices higher still. The inference follows that the price was dependent upon yield. A deficient harvest in 1804 was followed again by a rise in price. In short, the prices of wheat are in the nature of a barometrical record, for in 1804 Bank of England paper was again at par, and remained until 1808 at the insignificant discount of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. The highest price reached was the average of 126s. 6d. a quarter for 1812, the last of a series of four deficient harvests. Here, if anywhere, might be seen the beneficent influence of "soft money." But while in 1810 the *increased* issues of the Bank of England amounted to some £2,500,000 in notes of £5 and upwards, and £2,000,000 in notes under £5, the price of wheat in 1810–11 *fell* from 106s. 5d., the average for 1810, to 95s. 3d., and this notwithstanding an increase in the depreciation of Bank paper from 8 to 20 per cent.‡ The Bank issues in August, 1810, had reached the "enormous and unprecedented amount of £23,775,000."§ Between that time and 1812, when wheat prices were at their highest, the circulation of country banks had fallen from £21,000,000

* *Infrà*, p. 76, note †.

† These prices are taken from the "Statement of the annual average price of each kind of grain in England and Wales from 1771 to 1841." Parliamentary Papers, Feb. 11, 1842.

‡ Porter's "Progress of the Nation," page 429, ed. 1847.

§ Tooke, i. 365.

to £19,000,000,* and a like reduction had taken place in the issues of the Bank of England from £17,000,000 to £15,000,000. While from 1812 to 1815 the issues were increasing, the price of wheat was falling. In the face of these facts, what becomes of the proposition that "it was the abundance of inconvertible notes between 1797 and 1815 which led to the high prices and the great prosperity of agriculture during that period"? As to the assumption of the prosperity of agriculture not much need be said. That the high prices increased rents there can be no dispute, but as early as 1804 the fall of wheat gave rise to complaints of agricultural distress, which led to the enactment of the first Corn Law of the century. In 1814 a state of things which Mr. Everett summarises as "great prosperity" was thus described by the Committee of the House of Commons, upon whose report the Corn Law of the following year was passed—"Destitution seems to impend over the property of all those whose capital is engaged in the cultivation of the soil."

We now pass to the next period selected by Mr. Everett. "The year 1816," he says, "was a time of dreadful distress. There was a very wet harvest, but it was not this which produced the distress. At this time the inconvertible notes were to be called in, and it was the apprehension of this which led to the great fall in prices and the consequent distress."

Mr. Everett is right to mention the harvest. The operation of the cause he selects as productive of agricultural distress can be easily tested. "The inconvertible notes were to be called in." In point of fact, however, the Bank of England notes, the basis of the currency, were increased, not diminished, in the years prior to 1816, though calling in implies restriction of circulation. In August, 1814, they amounted to

* Lords' Committee on Cash Payments, 1819, page 12.

£28,360,000, an increase of £5,000,000 over February, 1813, and this increase was only reduced by £500,000 in 1815. Mr. Everett is, therefore, mistaken in his suggestion that an initial calling in was taking place. As for the country bank paper, as Mr. Horner observed in the House of Commons (May 1, 1816), "the reduction of the currency had originated in the previous fall of agricultural prices." This fall was due to the superabundant harvest of 1813. In August of that year wheat was at 112s.; in the December following at 73s. 6d. a quarter. To ascribe the fall to a reduction of the paper money is to put the cart before the horse. In the following year the ports were opened, and 800,000 quarters of wheat entered the country.

"In 1822," says Mr. Everett, "agriculture was plunged in wholesale bankruptcy." This is attributed by him to the return to cash payments. It is a curious coincidence that the harvests immediately preceding had been exuberant. So great was the yield in 1820 that Mr. Wakefield, an eminent land-surveyor, declared before the Committee on the State of Agriculture in April, 1821, that there was then "as much corn left in the country as generally in common years after harvest." The crop of 1820 was rivalled by the crop of 1821. Mr. J. Sanders, giving evidence before the Lords' Committee on Agriculture in 1836, was asked, "To what do you attribute the fall of corn in 1822?" His answer was, "To the very extraordinary crop in the year 1821; 1821 was a crop on the largest scale." Again there is a coincidence adverse to Mr. Everett in the state of the circulation. In the first place, Bank paper had risen to par in 1817, and the discount between that time and May, 1821, when it became convertible, was exceedingly insignificant. In the next place, though the lowest amount of Bank of England notes under £5 in circulation in 1822 was £1,200,000 less than in 1821, yet there was an issue of

sovereigns in 1821 of nearly £7,500,000, and people can trade with sovereigns at least as well as with paper. The total circulation of 1822, the year in which restricted circulation is said to have ruined agriculture, actually exceeded that of 1821 by nearly £3,000,000. As for the country bankers, their issues were, as they must be, responsive to the demands of country business. Mr. Hudson Gurney was asked by the Bullion Committee of 1819, "What determines, in your opinion, the fluctuations in the amount of country bank paper?" and replied, "The price at which the staple commodity of each district is selling; for example, I consider that our circulation would increase with a high price of corn, and would decrease with a low price of corn; corn being the staple of Norfolk." What has been said of the prospects of prices at this time sufficiently accounts for the contraction of the country note issues *as a consequence.*

In 1823, Mr. Everett tells us, the Government gave the small notes ten years more of life, "and immediately matters levelled up again." This is a mistake, of vital importance, as to date. The repeal of the clause of the Act directing the suppression of the £1 country notes took place not in 1823 but in June, 1822. Country bankers were then free, with ten years of life before them, to multiply their issues. "The subsequent rise in the price of corn, which is so commonly ascribed to the supposed influence of the prolongation, did not take place till a twelvemonth after the notice of that prolongation had been given."*

"In 1829," says Mr. Everett, "Parliament anticipated the ten years which they had given in 1823 . . . We had the same trouble again: there was another fall in prices." But the announcement was made in 1826, and according to Mr. Everett's previous reasoning the apprehension of the calling in of the notes would have

* Tooke ii. 115.

caused the price of corn to fall. On the contrary, it rose from 58s. 8d. in 1826 to 66s. 3d. in 1829. The reason, of course, was a deficiency in the harvest. The fall of prices in 1830 was only 2s., and in 1831 wheat was again at 66s. 4d., which looks as though the disappearance of £1 notes had not been very ruinous to agriculture. In the Lords' Committee on Agriculture, 1836, the point was succinctly put to the currency-mongers. "Whenever there happens to be a rise, you look out for some justification in the state of the harvest; and whenever there is a fall, you look out for some justification in the state of the currency, abandoning any argument to be drawn from wet harvests, or the operation of the weather?"*

"In 1833 there was another inquiry into the agricultural distress, and that distress was shown to have had its origin in the lower scale of prices arising from the contraction of the money in circulation." Such a cause would have immediately affected commerce and industry. But the evidence of Mr. Samuel Gurney and Mr. Lewis Lloyd, the bankers, was to the contrary effect. "Money is so abundant," said Mr. Lloyd to the Committee of Inquiry, "that the only difficulty is finding employment for it." On the other hand, the evidence taken before the same Committee goes to show that, at any rate in the southern counties, there never was a better crop of wheat than in 1832.† "It was an extraordinary crop." ‡ There were similar reasons for the fall in 1834–35, as amply appears from the evidence given before the Committee of 1836.§

* Evidence of E. S. Cayley, Esq., M.P., page 279.

† Hughes' evidence, 1833.

‡ Cornely's evidence, 1833.

§ "There have been three or four very abundant harvests in succession" (Bell, 11,891). "Five good harvests" (Jacob, 84-90). "But for the great crop of 1834 the country would now be in a situation to require importation" (Hodgson, 6,404-6,408). "The crop of 1820 was the most abundant this country ever produced, with the exception of the crop of 1834" (Sanders, 6,147).

At this stage of the controversy, a leading article in the *Manchester Guardian* of February 20th, 1893, proposed to shift the issue to another ground. "The influence," it said, "of a contraction of the currency, relative or absolute, in causing agricultural and industrial distress, is not disputed by any historian or economist of repute; but it is admitted that its effects cannot be rightly gauged except by the comparison of more or less protracted periods." The periods it selected for comparison were 1792 to 1797, 1797 to 1819, 1820 to 1831, and 1832 to 1850. Mr. Everett, in a letter published in the *Economist* of February 25th, adopted the same line of argument, abandoning the original position of changes in agricultural prices synchronously with enlargements and contractions of the paper issues.

Exception might fairly be taken to the proposal to shift the ground of discussion from years to cycles of years. Emissions of paper money in excess of legitimate demand are undoubtedly accompanied by an immediate rise of prices. I say "in excess of legitimate demand"—a term I will illustrate presently—because no other sense can be attached to Mr. Everett's doctrine of "abundance" of inconvertible notes, and of the prosperity consequent upon it. Now, as to the immediateness of the effect, take the history of assignats. On April 1st, 1795, 24 livres in coin were worth 238 in assignats; by July they were worth 808; by October, 1,205; by January, 1796, 4,658. There was no intermediate "cycle of years" before the consequences of "the abundance of inconvertible notes" made themselves felt. I grant that this is an extreme case, because the declining prospects of ultimate redemption contributed as much to the depreciation as the mere excess of issues. These had reached 22,000,000,000 francs, or £880,000,000, in October, 1795. But the same phenomenon recurred in the United States in 1862, the first year of the forced circulation of

greenbacks. The premium on gold in February stood at $2\frac{1}{8}$, and in December at 34. The history of the paper money issued in America during the Revolution is in exact correspondence with these two cases. Changes produced by this cause are immediate, not protracted over a cycle.

I go back to Mr. Everett's main contention, that "the abundance of inconvertible notes between 1797 and 1815 led to the high prices and the great prosperity of agriculture during that period." And let me first dispose of the word "prosperity." In the debate on the Address, Mr. Everett used the word without qualification. He subsequently* admitted that it was not genuine prosperity, for that "prosperity so created does not last." He had omitted to reflect that violent fluctuations are highly injurious to any industry, and that a system which involves these cannot confer prosperity. But he afterwards repented him of his partial concession, and asked, "What made rents rise? What else was it but prosperity?" I reply: What made the shares of the South Sea Company rise, or in John Law's Company of the Indies? Not prosperity, but the hope of prosperity. I recall the report of the Committee of the House of Commons in 1814, which excepted no class connected with agriculture from the verdict of misfortune. If Mr. Everett would know why, despite the nominally high rents, even the landlords were sufferers, he will find the reasons set forth in Lord Fitzwilliam's "Address to the Landowners of England" in 1834.

Next as to "the abundance of inconvertible notes." This "abundance" is imaginary, in the sense that it was a spontaneous emission irrespective of legitimate demand, or exceeding combined paper and metallic issues had there been no restriction. The Bank directors who gave evidence before the Bullion Committee of 1810, declared that their advances were only upon good mercantile bills,

* *Economist*, Feb. 25th, 1893.

at the rate of five per cent. This is what I mean when I speak of issues in conformity with legitimate demand. "The Bank," said the governor, "never forces a note into circulation" (p. 91). "The amount of the bank notes in circulation (is) controlled by the public for internal purposes" (p. 157). "From the manner in which the issue of bank notes is controlled, the public will never call for more than is absolutely necessary for their wants" (*ibid.*). Now, had no notes been in existence at all, the Bank would have made its advances on precisely the same principles. Would the "abundance" of sovereigns then have caused the high prices of agricultural produce? If the Bank directors' account of their system is true, as we must suppose, where was the "abundance" of paper producing these results?

It is the case that the circulation increased during the years in question. This in itself is no evidence of "abundance"—in other words, inflation. The *Manchester Guardian* justly reminded me that there was "an increase of population and expansion of trade and industry," and this is as true of the period of the war as after the peace. Nor need we rely upon the evidence of the Bank directors to prove that no such "abundance" existed. Thornton, in his work on Paper Credit (p. 236), supplies a gauge by which to judge paper issues. "An excessive issue of paper has not been the leading cause of a fall in the exchange if it afterwards turns out that the exchange is able to recover itself without any material reduction of the quantity of paper." In this country, as Tooke pointed out, "the exchanges, upon every pause from the pressure of extraordinary foreign payments, tended towards a recovery." And this took place even coincidently with increased issues. Finally, no contraction of the circulation was required, when the pressure of foreign payments had ceased, to restore the exchanges and the price of gold to par. Then there

could have been no "abundance," in the sense of an excessive issue, raising internal prices. Would all this have been even remotely true of assignats or greenbacks, or the continental currency? If these are the facts as to the Bank of England issues, it follows that not they, but the war, the seasons, and the Corn Laws were in turn and together the causes, and the exclusive causes, of the high prices of 1797–1819.

The next cycle is that of the resumption of cash payments. The average price of the quarter of wheat from 1820 to 1831 was 60s., as contrasted with 90s. during the war period from 1797. It is assumed that the contraction of the circulating medium operated as a cause to lower prices. Upon this assumption, Max Wirth, the German historian of commercial crises, observes that though the contraction would have produced, had the war continued, a great revolution in prices, it is otherwise when peace is restored, because in war the balance of accounts has almost always to be made in gold, while in peace a large part of the circulating medium is replaced by exchange. As to the earlier part of this cycle—viz., from 1823 to 1825—Tooke comes to the conclusion, after a careful inquiry, that "the prices of corn did not vary coincidently in point of time, nor proportionately in degree, with the variations in the prices of commodities" (II. 190). Why not, if the contraction was the factor governing the situation? With respect to the second part of the cycle (1828 to 1832), Tooke has shown that the price of the Winchester quarter of wheat on the average of five years ending in 1832 would, adding the 44s. a quarter of the old Corn Law of 1808 to 1813, have equalled the average of the last five years of the war. The fall was, therefore, due to the repeal of the law, wholly independent of currency.

The cycle 1832 to 1850 includes the introduction of Free Trade in corn, as well as that cheapening system of

production known as "High Farming," which followed the General Enclosure Act of 1845. The effect on prices of the importation of gold from Australia is, of course, notorious. I never questioned it.

This review of the years and cycles selected by the Agricultural Bimetallists shows both their facts and their conclusions to be at fault. If the successive periods of agricultural distress which recurred under the Corn Laws were due not to the operation of those laws in stimulating the cultivation of wheat upon unfavourable soils, and the consequent rise of rents and fall of profits and wages, but to blundering manipulations of the currency, a case would be made for a reconsideration of Protection to Agriculture. As for Bimetallism, which is the immediate object of Mr. Everett's advocacy, it must look for its arguments elsewhere than in a fallacious retrospect of the relations of currency to agricultural prices.

Various other suggestions have been made for meeting agricultural depression, among them the adoption of a sliding scale for rents based upon the prices of produce. From the evidence before the House of Commons Committee on the State of Agriculture in 1836 it appears that this had been tried in Scotland in combination with long leases. It is generally believed to have been satisfactory, though the witnesses at that inquiry passed no distinct judgment upon its effect. Its incorporation into Mr. Gladstone's Irish Land Act would undoubtedly have averted the confusion which has attended the working of that measure. An objection has been raised that it involved an uncertainty to the tenant as to the amount of his prospective outgoings, and this must certainly have been so in the days when, through the operation of the Corn Laws, violent fluctuations of prices constantly occurred, and no efficient system of statistics existed. Again, the quantity and quality of a harvest are coefficients of its value to an

individual farmer. After all, however, the relations between rent and profits could scarcely be more unsatisfactory than they are under the normal arrangement of to-day. A Royal Commission in Holland which has recently (February, 1893) reported upon the tenure of land in that country, recommends—though with hesitation—that the judge of the district should, upon the evidence of experts, and at the instance of one of the parties, where a sliding scale of rent is agreed to be paid, fix an average price for produce. It is probable that in this country owners will be reluctant to adopt a system which is in this way likely to lead to the establishment of Land Courts.

Among the farmers opposed to Protection and who, as has been said, belong for the most part to the North of England, where rents in the neighbourhood of the great towns are exceedingly high, there is a strong disposition in favour of the "three F's" of Irish tenancy. A Federation of Tenant Farmers' Clubs has been established to push forward reforms in this direction. On the other hand, the anti-Protectionists among the landlords direct attention to the profits made at the expense both of farmers and consumers by the middlemen who purchase agricultural produce wholesale. Associations for the co-operative distribution of produce by the farmers themselves already exist in Suffolk (Market Gardeners' and Farmers' Association) and in Yorkshire. It was stated at the Agricultural Conference of December, 1892, that ninety members of the Yorkshire Association, farming principally arable land to the extent of 20,000 acres, had a turn-over in 1891 of over £12,000, paid 5 per cent. on their capital and declared a bonus; and certainly if the number of small holdings is to be extended the need for such co-operation is pressing. A resolution was moved at the Conference by a delegate from Suffolk, for the establishment of an "Agricultural

Produce Association," with a central depôt in London and branches throughout the country, and was carried unanimously. The Cobden Club does not as a body commit itself to specific methods of reform; but it is convinced that most of the difficulties with which British agriculture has to grapple come from within rather than from without. At a meeting of the Committee of the Club on February 11th, 1893, a resolution was carried which, while condemning the Protectionist proposals of the Agricultural Conference, indicated the general lines upon which agricultural reform should be based. The resolution runs as follows:—

> "That the Committee of the Cobden Club condemn the resolution in favour of a return to Protection passed by the London Agricultural Conference in December last, upon the ground that experience has shown that agricultural Protection in any form, while entailing injurious sacrifices upon the nation at large, is especially prejudicial to the farmer and labourer. It renders the occupation of the farmer additionally precarious, while the anticipations excited by legislation have always raised rents, at the expense of profits and wages, to a level higher than could be justified by the increased prices.
>
> "The Committee further record their opinion that the real remedies for agricultural depression are to be sought in reform of the laws affecting the ownership and occupation of land, in the removal of restrictive covenants from agricultural leases and the cultivation of more varied crops, in the extension of agricultural education and the improvement of agricultural practice, and in co-operation among producers themselves in the distribution of agricultural produce."

I. S. L.

May, 1893.

WHAT PROTECTION DOES
FOR THE
FARMER AND LABOURER.

"Of all things an indiscreet tampering with the trade of provisions is the most dangerous . . . because there is nothing on which the passions of men are so violent, and their judgment so weak, and on which there exists a multitude of ill-founded popular prejudices."

"It is a perilous thing to try experiments on the Farmer."

EDMUND BURKE, "Thoughts and Details on Scarcity."

Agricultural Distress. Proposed Remedies. Reform.

THE continuing grave crisis* in the fortunes of agriculture has naturally attracted attention to the conditions under which the Farmer carries on his industry. It is generally agreed that, unless he is to be abandoned to the shifting chances of the seasons, some remedy for his difficulties must be found. One school of reformers attributes his embarrassments to causes chiefly indirect in their operation—to the trammels subject to which the present Proprietors of Land enjoy their property, to the obstacles thrown by law in the way of its improvement, and to the devices contrived by settlement to withhold it from the market. Others dwell rather upon evils attaching directly to the status of the Farmer himself: the risk of confiscation for his capital invested in the soil, the liability to arbitrary raisings of Rent upon his own improvements,† the operation of the Law of Distress,

* The variations in the number of Farmers' failures during the past seventeen years show the fluctuations of pressure. They are as follows:—

	1875.	1876.	1877.	1878.	1879.	1880.
England and Wales ...	255	388	396	626	1,196	1,097
Scotland	17	14	24	47	110	84
	1881.	1882.	1883.	1884.	1885.	1886.
England and Wales ...	918	533	422	221	236	341
Scotland	56	66	57	72	63	124
	1887.	1888.	1889.	1890.	1891.	
England and Wales ...	297	276	252	179	188	
Scotland	104	58	56	45	46	

These figures are taken from *Kemp's Mercantile Gazette*, Dec. 29, 1886, and Dec. 30, 1891.

† In 1884, Mr. Smith-Woolley computed the reductions of rent up to November of that year, from the experience of his own office of land

which at the same time impairs the Farmer's credit and enhances the Landlord's rental, the ravages of game, the instability of tenure, and the want of capacity to conform to the altered circumstances of agriculture naturally engendered by a system which admits neither independence nor security. For the labourer there is a general consent that Allotments should be fairly tried, and that small holdings should be put within the reach of the more educated and enterprising. The national moderation of Englishmen, especially of the classes engaged in agriculture, is disposed to be content for the present with these reforms. There is, however, a section of root-and-branch reformers who, not satisfied by the gradual diminution in the size of holdings, and consequent concentration of capital with an increased number of proprietors, which, with time, would follow these changes, demands the appropriation of the soil by the State, and the wholesale creation of a peasant proprietary. This school is largely composed of persons generally un-

agency, at an average of 30 per cent. This computation appears to have been based upon the figures of new lettings, or, at least, to have included them. Sitting tenants have been less liberally dealt with. From the returns to a circular issued by him in 1884 Mr. James Howard estimated the remissions to sitting tenants up to that date at 13 per cent. In 1884 a Return was moved for by Sir George Balfour showing the fall of rents in Great Britain since 1876-7. The Return was headed "Rental of farms, market gardens, nursery grounds (Schedule B) in 1876-7 and 1882-3, with decrease for each county in the six years." This gives the rental of Great Britain in 1876-7 at £59,300,285, and at £55,841,857 in 1882-3—a decline of 5·8 per cent. The difference between the percentages appears to be due to the fact that Mr. Smith-Woolley's and Mr. Howard's returns were of purely agricultural holdings. The extension of the area of cultivated land, representing 2·6 per cent. between 1876 and 1883, and an additional ·4 per cent. down to 1885 helps further to account for the variations. The Income Tax Returns of 1892, Schedule B, give the average rentals of Great Britain for 1874-5 to 1879-80 as £57,459,188, and for 1884-5 to 1889-90 as £55,250,130, a fall of only 3·84 per cent. After all, the Income Tax Returns, Schedule B, only give an approximate indication of the rise and fall of rents. They include the tithe rent-charge, which does not decline at the same rate with the rent. They also include sums paid for drainage. "I know many farms where the drainage rate is 15s. an acre, and that is included in Schedule B. During these bad times the drainage tax has increased, and so the apparent reduction of rent in Schedule B is very small indeed, while the actual reduction to the landlord is enormous." Mr. W. C. Little at the Farmers' Club, Dec. 1884. Sir R. Paget at the Agricultural Conference held in London in December, 1892, calculated the fall of agricultural rents in the fifteen years 1879-93 at 20 per cent., which is a very probable estimate.

acquainted with the conditions of English agriculture, but who look to find sympathetic audiences among the mechanics of large towns. They point triumphantly to the establishment of peasant proprietors in Prussia by Stein and Hardenberg, and in Russia by Alexander II., entirely forgetting that those beneficial reforms were not the conversion of a manufacturing into an agricultural population, but, in effect, the natural evolution into small Farmers of predial serfs. But the British public as yet evinces no disposition to the belief that changes are only salutary in proportion as they are sweeping. These schools of opinion have long held possession of the field, but another has of late emerged from the discredit of a quarter of a century. The commercial depression from which during the last fifteen years the world has been suffering has revived the Protectionist party among our manufacturers, and has suggested Protection as a cure for the ills of agriculture. In the view of those who advocate a change in this direction, the Farmers' calamities have not been due to the disabilities enumerated, but to the severity of foreign competition in corn. Security for the Tenants' investments in the soil is not an urgent need, since in Great Britain, at any rate, the Landlord executes the greatest part of the permanent improvements, and Landlords are just now loth to part with energetic Tenants. For the same reason the Landlord is generally justified in raising Rents upon improvements. The Law of Distress enables him to extend indulgence to struggling Farmers. All these fancied grievances, it is urged, could be supported with indifference by the Farmer if he could but realise a remunerative price for his produce. What this remunerative minimum may be is not at present authoritatively determined. Mr. James Lowther, representing the party of Protection to agriculture, has advocated the imposition of a duty upon foreign wheat of at least 5s. a quarter, and this seems the sum which generally finds acceptance among agricultural Protectionists. By the imposition of this duty, it is said, the area of the corn lands, which has of late showed a progressive contraction, will again be enlarged; the labouring population will suffer no privation, and the Farmers will enjoy a sensible relief.

Protection.

It is sufficiently obvious that if a duty of 5s. on corn would be an assistance to the Farmer, he would derive benefit in proportion to the height to which this duty was raised. So far, therefore, as his exclusive interest is concerned, the duty of 10s., preferred by some,* would be twice as remedial as a duty of 5s. Agriculture is the most indispensable of industries, and if it be conceded, as by the theory of Protection it is, that one industry may tax others for its advantage, then agriculture has the first claim to be heard, and the right to a superior degree of relief, both on the ground of the comparative severity of its distress and of its primary importance to the community. The advocates of Protection to agriculture must, therefore, ask for the highest duty which the jealousy of the manufacturing interest will permit them to obtain. Accordingly it is of importance to weigh the advantages which accrued to the Farmer through the various Protective duties imposed by the different Corn Laws. In the light of such a retrospect the Farmer will be best able to determine the minimum which, should he so desire, he will instruct his representatives to demand. Moreover, in the history of agriculture there is no more instructive chapter.

History of Protection.

During the great French war which came to a close in 1815 considerable difficulty was at times experienced in provisioning the Army and Navy, there being at that time no exports of corn from America, and the corn ports of the Continent being shut against us by Napoleon. This necessarily enhanced the price of food at home, and caused inferior soils to be brought into cultivation. Barley, rye, and oats were largely employed for human food, and so apprehensive was the Legislature of dearth that it was enacted that bread should not be sold by the bakers until it had been at least twenty-four hours out of the oven, and thereby acquired a certain degree of staleness which should render it less liable to be cut to waste.

1802-4. Farmers' distress.

In 1801 the average price of British wheat rose to 119s. 6d. a quarter. This extraordinary price further

* *See* Preface to the Fourth Edition, p. x. *suprà*. In the Debate on the Address (1893) Mr. H. R. Farquharson, a Protectionist member, pleaded for a measure to raise wheat to a normal level of 40s. Since the average price of wheat for 1892 was 30s. 4d. this would mean a duty of 9s. 8d.

enlarged the corn area. With wheat at such quotations the Farmer of to-day might think himself prosperous; nevertheless in 1802-3 and 1804, as prices declined *there were complaints of agricultural distress.* The Committee of the House of Commons, to whom petitions relating to agricultural distress were referred, reported: "It appears to your Committee that the price of corn from 1791–1803 has been very irregular. The casual high prices have had the effect of bringing into cultivation large tracts of waste land, which, combined with the two last productive seasons and other causes, have occasioned such a depression in the value of grain as, it is feared, will greatly tend to the discouragement of agriculture, unless maintained by the support of Parliament." Accordingly, in 1804, the first Corn Law of the century was passed, imposing a prohibitory duty of 24s. 3d. when the price was below 63s., and extending the operation of the existing bounty on export. The object of this Act was the relief of agriculture by keeping prices at something like the height of 1801.

From 1805 to 1813 the price of wheat was maintained. In 1812 it reached 126s. 6d.,* and the average for the five years prior to 1814 was 107s. The opening of foreign ports which followed upon the return of peace rapidly lowered prices. The Landlords became alarmed, and insisted that the ruin of the British farmer must ensue with wheat at 74s. 4d. and threatening further decline. Such a result was certainly inevitable *if Rents were to be maintained* at the high rates they had reached. In 1814, therefore, a Select Committee was appointed by the House of Commons to consider petitions relating to the Corn Laws. The Committee inquired with much diligence into the "present expenses of cultivation, *including the Rent*," and its Report contains passages which show to whose real advantage the high prices of wheat had conduced. In the years of distress which followed, and which will hereafter be considered, the Farmer frequently looked back with regret to this period. Those who had leases dating from the preceding century no

* The depreciation of the currency had increased. The real price was not beyond 100s. a quarter. Porter's "Progress of the Nation," ed. 1847, chap. i., sect. ii.

doubt derived considerable profit; but to the majority the "expenses of cultivation" rose faster than the prices of produce. In the years 1790—1795 the Farmer had found little difficulty in earning a livelihood with wheat as low as 43s. But on the 7th of March, 1814, Mr. Western, a Protectionist member, laid upon the table of the House of Commons a series of fourteen resolutions, declaring the "unexampled distress" of the agriculturists, the danger of its continuance, the slackness of the demand for agricultural produce, the heaviness of the burdens upon the Farmers in the shape of Tithes, Taxes, and Poor Rates.* "Thousands have been already ruined, and destitution seems to impend over the property of all those whose capital is engaged in the cultivation of the soil." The outcome of these complaints was a demand for increased Protection. It was "the concurrent opinion of most of the witnesses before the House of Commons

1814. Inquiry into distress of Farmers.

* It is sometimes maintained that the burden of taxation in this country is so exceptionally heavy as to justify the imposition of duties upon foreign imports with the object of putting competition on an equal basis. This proposition, of course, extends to all industries. It is no doubt arguable that the land in this country is unduly burdened in comparison with other industries, and upon this contention, if substantiated, may be founded a plea for the equalisation of burdens upon all internal investments of capital. The argument, as applied to land, depends upon the assumption that taxation forms part of the cost of production. But taxation forms no part of the cost of production so long as it leaves a margin of rent. Even if taxation did form part of the cost of production, then, assuming the statement to be true that taxation here is exceptionally heavy as compared with that of other countries, this does not sustain an inference in favour of import duties. For, in the first place, it is an axiom of international trade that "it is not a difference in the *absolute* cost of production which determines the interchange, but a difference in the *comparative* cost," that is to say, a difference in the cost of one class of exchangeable commodity as compared with another in the same country, not a difference in the cost of the same class of commodity in the exchanging countries. The best illustration of this is given by Professor Cairnes in the fact of the importation by Australia, in the time of the first gold discoveries, of the foodstuffs she could have grown more cheaply herself. Cp. J. S. Mill, "Principles of Political Economy," Book III., chap. xvii., s. 2; and Cairnes' "Leading Principles of Political Economy," Part III., International Trade, chap. i., Doctrine of Comparative Cost. A pressure of taxation, therefore, equally distributed among the various industries, does not, so far as international trade is concerned, affect their capacity to maintain themselves. As to agriculture, "it may even be contended that a people which must pay a particularly large amount to its exchequer stands all the more urgently in need of liberty to seek out the most profitable employment of the capital which remains." W. Roscher, "Ueber Kornhandel und Theuerungspolitik," Stuttgart, 1852.

Committee in 1814 that 80s. per quarter is the lowest price which would afford to the British grower an adequate remuneration, while several other witnesses, equally distinguished for their knowledge and experience in matters connected with the letting of estates and the agriculture of the country, state that the price of 80s. a quarter will not afford sufficient protection to the British grower. Several prices, from 84s. to 96s., have been stated by different witnesses as the lowest which, under the present charges and expenses of cultivation, would afford a fair remuneration to the grower."

Rent doubled in twenty years.

The first ground for these estimates was that "it is stated by all the evidence that, within the period of twenty years, the money Rent of land, taken upon an average, has been doubled."* This had been the first effect of the high prices for which the Farmers were desirous. In view of the item of Rent alone, those high prices had brought no benefit to the Farmers, but the contrary. The average price of wheat for the years 1775—1794 (inclusive) had been 46s. 3d.;† the average price of wheat for the years 1795—1814 (inclusive) was 85s. 4d. It is plain that it was necessary for the Farmer, other things being equal, to receive such a price as would cover the addition made to his rent.‡ But he did not. Rents, it may be said, rose gradually, but so did the price of wheat. In 1801 wheat had attained its maximum; but, as we see from the Report of the Committee of 1814, though prices had declined, Rents had been maintained by the speculative competition of the Farmers themselves. Nor is the extent of the Farmers' losses through these years of Protection and high prices to be measured only by the difference between the doubled Rent which he paid his Landlord, and the inadequately increased price which he received in the market. Mr. William Driver, Land Surveyor, being asked by the Committee, "Are you aware that the Poor Rates have increased rapidly within the last ten years?" answers, "Yes, I am aware that they have very materially." "To what do you attribute that increase?" "To the high price of corn." Mr. William

1814.

* See Appendix A.

† The imperial quarter is the measure taken throughout.

‡ Compare the evidence of Mr. W. Ilott in 1821 on p. 32.

High prices and Poor Rates.

Henning, of Dellington, Somerset, Landowner, being asked, "Has the Poor Rate increased in the course of the last ten years?" answers, "From ten to fifteen years it has increased more than double." As will be seen from evidence given before subsequent Committees, when harvests were abundant and wheat was cheap, the returns to the Farmer were so much below his outgoings that he was unable to support his labourers. They were, therefore, thrown upon the parish. Official statistics prove that in 1801 the sum expended for the relief of the poor was £4,017,871, and in 1814, £6,294,581. The evidence of the witnesses before the Committee of 1814, and the comparative cheapness of corn, show that most of this increase was in the agricultural districts, for the agricultural labourer occupied a somewhat anomalous position. The Poor Rates showed less agricultural pauperism during high prices of corn,* whence it was seriously argued that dear bread was beneficial to the labourer. The fact was that, whether bread was dear or cheap, the labourer was in a state of continuous pauperism, engendered of a vicious Poor Law system. When the returns upon wheat were high, the Farmers could afford to give full

* It has been uniformly assumed by the advocates of a Free Trade in corn that pauperism in the agricultural districts rose and fell with the rise and fall respectively of the prices of corn. The writer is convinced, both from the evidence given before the various Parliamentary Committees, some of which is quoted in the text, and from the figures adduced by the Free Trade controversialists themselves, that this is an error. The statement is made in his Anti-Corn Law pamphlets by Earl Fitzwilliam, and set forth in detail in the Prize Essay of Mr. Greg, published by the Anti-Corn Law League. Mr. Greg gives a table as follows :—

Sums Expended for the Relief of the Poor.

Counties.	Under the Old Poor Law.		Under the New Poor Law.	
	1829. £	1833. £	1837. £	1839. £
Bucks	135,239	124,200	61,634	72,367
Bedford	84,513	77,819	37,447	39,889
Essex	282,132	239,946	149,356	165,340
Devon	222,381	210,825	169,449	194,361
Dorset	90,949	84,293	63,531	81,373
Total	515,214	737,083	481,417	553,330
Average Price of Wheat ...	66s. 3d.	52s. 11d.	55s. 10d.	70s. 8d.

The figures of the years 1829 and 1833, under the Old Poor Laws,

employment, and the labourers contrived, with difficulty, to maintain existence, independent of the Poor Rates, on sums averaging about 6s. a week.* When the price of wheat was low, and the Farmers were themselves impoverished, a condition of things which, in view of the prices with reference to which their Rents had been fixed, was the more frequent, the labourers' destitution was relieved out of the Poor Rates, which accordingly increased in amount. To be well within the mark, therefore, it may be assumed that the growth of the Poor Rates between 1801 and 1814, a dear year and a comparatively cheap one, was not greater in the agricultural districts than elsewhere. Yet even so an increment is exhibited of 50 per cent., an additional burden upon the Farmers' shoulders.

prove nothing, for it will be observed that while the price of wheat declined 21 per cent., the cost of agricultural pauperism was diminished by no more than 9 per cent. If the fall in the price of wheat had the effect ascribed to it, that effect was successfully counteracted by the growth of pauperism under a system which seemed specially contrived to foster it. It is fairer, therefore, to judge Mr. Greg's figures by the years 1837 and 1839, in which an improved Poor Law was in force. In the year 1839 the price of wheat is advanced 26 per cent.; the cost of agricultural pauperism, on the other hand, has only increased 14 per cent.; an increase sufficiently accounted for by the rise of wheat, without taking into account the growth of population. In the same way Mr. Villiers, speaking in the House of Commons in June 1844, said, "In the fifteen agricultural counties he found the increase in the amount of Poor Rates between 1836 and 1842 was 21 per cent." It happens, however, that the rise in the price of corn was 18 per cent., viz., from 48s. 6d. to 57s. 3d.; that the population had considerably multiplied, and that the health and comfort of paupers were more carefully supervised. Upon this point, therefore, the Free Traders have overrated their case, but they might have maintained with justice that for the agricultural labourer, the difference between a year of high and a year of low prices was simply the difference between independent and dependent destitution.

* The natural and necessary tendency of Protection is to depress wages. Wages may be defined as the labourer's share of that which is produced. It is admitted that under Protection production is diverted into channels less productive than it would otherwise seek. So much is allowed by our Fair Traders, who therefore profess to be all Free Traders at heart, and only desirous of using Fair Trade as a means to an end. But if under Protection the productiveness of capital be less, it follows that the labourer's share will be less, unless he can make profits bear the loss. This, however, he cannot do, for capital being less productive there is less return to be employed in setting labour in motion. Instead of capital competing for labour, labour competes with labour for employment. Want of employment drives the artisans into the field, and a fall of agricultural labourers' wages is the inevitable consequence.

Early in 1816, the Board of Agriculture addressed circular letters of inquiry as to the agricultural state of every part of the kingdom. One of its queries was as to the "State of the Labouring Poor and Poor Rates," and the replies received by it are summarised as follows:—

"The total number of letters containing replies on the first of these subjects amounts to 273.

"Two hundred and thirty-seven letters describe the state of the poor under various expressions, denoting a want of employment in terms more or less forcible.

"One hundred and one of the above letters, expatiating on the degree of this want of employment, describe the extreme distress resulting from it as amounting to great misery and wretchedness, and in some cases to an alarming degree.

"Eighteen letters describe the state of the Labouring Poor as neither better nor worse than formerly.

"Twenty-five letters give a favourable report, representing their state as not in want of employment, and therefore not distressed.

"These forty-three cases so much more favourable than the rest require a few words of explanation, as in fifteen of them there occur circumstances tending to show that whatever the present state may be, it will soon become not superior to that of the rest. In seven of these cases, they are attended by minutes of unoccupied farms and notices to quit. In two others, Poor Rates are stated to be high and increased. In one other, the favourable report combines with the fact of fifty farmers being distrained for rent. In another case, the favourable report is confined to one or two parishes with much distress in their vicinity. In one other, in which the Poor are represented as not suffering, it is admitted that they have less employment than heretofore. In another case, employment is found by manufacturers, and in one, the Reporter employs all the poor of his parish, on a principle of charity."

Data for estimating Farmers' losses, 1795-1814.

Taking these two items of Rent and Poor Rates alone, therefore, the net result to the Farmer of Protectionist legislation for enhancing the price of corn was, on the evidence of the distressed Protectionist

Farmers themselves, a serious annual loss. During the twenty years 1795–1814 wheat had, as has been seen, risen less than 85 per cent. Rent, on the other hand, which, as witnesses before the later Parliamentary Committees testify, was adjusted upon the basis of the anticipated returns to wheat, had risen 100 per cent.; and Poor Rates, at the lowest possible estimate, 50 per cent.

Excessive rise of Rents in Scotland.

How much under the mark this estimate is, particularly applied to the Northern parts of the Kingdom, may be conjectured from the evidence of Mr. Low, the Professor of Agriculture in the University of Edinburgh, before the Committee of the House of Commons in 1833, as to the rise of Rents during this period in Scotland. He says: "Comparing the period from the year 1781 to 1794 with the period from 1800 to 1804, I think the average rise of Rents in Scotland was about 86 per cent.; and comparing the same period, 1781 to 1794, with that from 1804 to the end of the war (1814), I think there was a rise of 150 per cent. on a medium." This is confirmed by the official estimates of the Rental of Scotland as £2,000,000 in 1795, and £5,278,685 (exclusive of houses) in 1815. If these be just calculations, the balance against the Scottish Farmer would be yet heavier. The rise in Poor Rates, which were below the Rates in the South of England, may be reduced to 25 per cent. Yet even this is a portentous growth. It is of more importance to observe again that the rise of Rent 150 per cent. was a rise infinitely exceeding in proportion the rise of wheat. Nor did the Farmer derive any compensation from the price of meat. Importation was prohibited, consumption was comparatively unprogressive, and the excessive fluctuations (100 per cent. in six years—1808–14) which were the natural effect of Protection, served only to the further enhancement of Rents. It is therefore no matter for astonishment that by 1814 the cry of agricultural distress had grown loud and universal.

Losses of the Scottish Farmer.

In accordance with the report of the Committee of 1814 a Bill was carried through Parliament in the following year for the purpose of affording further Protection to the depressed industry of agriculture.

The remedy sought in increased Protection.

Considering the evidence of the witnesses as to the lowest remunerative price of corn—evidence, be it remembered, in all cases based upon the assumption that Rents were to be maintained at their existing level—this measure of Protection was exceedingly moderate. This was due, perhaps, to the discontent which it aroused in many parts of the country, and which in some places broke out into disturbances, only quelled by military force. It was unblushingly maintained by the Landowners that it was for the welfare of the State to uphold at their accustomed level the fortunes of a class which supplied officers to the public service.* The Parliament of 1815, therefore, being composed almost exclusively of Landowners, proceeded to enact a Corn Law which excluded foreign wheat when the price was under 80s. a quarter, allowing its free importation when above 80s.

Opposition to further Protection.

It was not only by the manufacturers that this enactment was opposed. In the House of Lords it gave occasion to a weighty protest drawn up by Lord Grenville, the friend of Pitt, framed not merely upon abstract economic principles, but upon the teaching of recent experience. It was a prophecy of consequences which inevitably ensued.

* This argument is seriously urged by Mr. Jacob, a distinguished Protectionist Pamphleteer. It is obviously a view that would enjoy general social currency. It has recently reappeared. In December, 1884, Lord Walsingham, in reply to a circular of Lord Rosebery requesting the opinions of the peers as to the reform of the House of Lords, indicated a protective measure as the reform really needed, for "if peers, who are for the most part landowners, were not forced by one-sided Free Trade to let their London houses and live in the country, the attendance in the House of Lords would be greatly increased." This shows a landlord's opinion as to which class it is that reaps the benefit of agricultural protective duties and ought to do so. A later expression of the same view occurs in a speech delivered at a demonstration of "The National Association for the Preservation of Agriculture and our other Industries" in St. James's Hall on the 8th December, 1887. Mr. Poynter, Chairman of the Association, speaking of food, said: "The so-called cheapness had only been brought about by the appropriation of a large part of the landlords' property." So in France, M. Yves Guyot, in his pamphlet on "The French Corn Laws," speaking of the supporters of the law of 1887, which increased the Protection to agriculture, says:—"In the midst of big words about agriculture it was, however, so clearly the question of property which preoccupied the minds of the chief supporters of the law, that its reporter, M. Méline, spoke of the profit of agriculture as being 2,600 millions of francs. But this sum represents in France the rents of the landowners, not the incomes of the cultivators and farmers." (p. 11.)

PROTEST SUBSCRIBED BY TEN PEERS, ENTERED IN THE JOURNALS OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS, AGAINST THE CORN LAW OF 1815. 1815.

"DISSENTIENT I.—Because we are adverse in principle to all new restraints on commerce. We think it is certain that public prosperity is best promoted by leaving uncontrolled the free current of national industry, and we wish rather, by well-considered steps, to bring back our commercial legislation to the straight and simple line of wisdom, than to increase the deviation by subjecting additional and extensive branches of the public interest to fresh systems of artificial and injurious restrictions.

"II.—Because we think that the great practical rule of leaving all commerce unfettered applies *more peculiarly*, and on still stronger grounds of justice as well as policy, to the Corn Trade than to any other. Irresistible, indeed, must be that necessity which could, in our judgment, authorise the Legislature to tamper with the sustenance of the people, and to impede the free purchase of that article on which depends the existence of so large a portion of the community.

"III.—Because we think that the expectations of ultimate benefit from this measure are founded on a delusive theory. We cannot persuade ourselves that this law will ever contribute to produce plenty, cheapness, or steadiness of price. So long as it operates at all, its effect must be the opposite of these. *Monopoly is the parent of scarcity, of dearness, and of uncertainty.* To cut off any of the sources of supply can only tend to lessen its abundance; to close against ourselves the cheapest market for any commodity must enhance the price at which we purchase it; and to confine the consumer of corn to the produce of his own country is to refuse to ourselves the benefit of that provision which Providence itself has made for equalising to man the varieties of climate and of seasons.

"IV.—But whatever may be the future consequences of this law at some distant and uncertain period, we see with pain that these hopes must be purchased at the

The Corn Law of 1815.

expense of a great and present evil. To compel the consumer to purchase corn dearer at home than it might be imported from abroad is the immediate practical effect of this law. In this way alone can it operate. Its present protection, its promised extension of agriculture, must result (if at all) from the profits which it creates by keeping up the price of corn to an artificial level. These future benefits are the consequences expected, but, as we believe, erroneously expected, from giving a bounty to the grower of corn by a tax levied on its consumer.

"V.—Because we think the adoption of any permanent law for such a purpose required the fullest and most laborious investigation. Nor would it have been sufficient for our satisfaction could we have been convinced of the general policy of a hazardous experiment. A still further inquiry would have been necessary to persuade us that the present moment is fit for its adoption. In such an inquiry we must have had the means of satisfying ourselves what its immediate operation will be, as connected with the various pressing circumstances of public difficulty and distress with which the country is surrounded; with the state of our circulation and currency, of our agriculture and manufactures, of our internal and *external* commerce, and, above all, with the condition and reward of the industrious and labouring classes of our community.

"On all these particulars, as they respect this question, we think that Parliament is almost wholly uninformed; on all we see reason for the utmost anxiety and alarm from the operation of this law.

"Lastly, Because if we could approve of the principle and purpose of this law we think that no sufficient foundation has been laid for its details. The evidence before us, unsatisfactory and imperfect as it is, seems to us rather to disprove than to support the propriety of the high price adopted as the standard of importation, and the fallacious mode by which that price is to be ascertained. And on all these grounds we are anxious to record our dissent from a measure so precipitate in its course, and, as we fear, so injurious in its consequences."

"To this Bill," wrote Earl Fitzwilliam, twenty-five

years later, in his address to the Landowners of England, 1815-1822.
"I gave my assent, and of all the important questions upon which I voted in the course of the twenty-five years during which, with one short interval, I have sat in Parliament, it is the only one upon which I regret the part I took. I am and have been for years satisfied that that measure was founded on the most erroneous principles, and that it has been attended by the most disastrous consequences. In this place allow me to draw your attention to the effects which it produced upon poor Tenants. Relying upon the wisdom and power of the Legislature, they were induced by it to expect prices for their produce which the law and the proceedings that led to its enactment held out to them by Act of Parliament. If prices rose to an extravagant height, as they did in 1817, in consequence of the deficient harvest of 1816, the expectations of the Farmers and Land Valuers rose still higher; while, on the other hand, if they fell below the Parliamentary standard, the fall was attributed to some accidental and transient cause, and was disregarded in fixing Rents, both by the Landlord, the Valuer, and the Tenant."

Hopes of the Farmers.

The Act was, however, passed amidst the general congratulations of the Farmers. The bidding for farms grew brisk: Rents shot up. Inferior land was reclaimed at vast expenditure of Tenants' capitals, and the productiveness of soil already in cultivation was stimulated, though with necessarily decreasing returns. The impetus thus artificially applied to corn-growing worked its natural results. In view of the abundance of wheat in the market, it was impossible to maintain it at the promised price of 80s. a quarter. The year after the passing of the Act and before the effects of the Farmers' internecine competition had fully disclosed themselves, it reached an average of 78s. 6d. The harvest of 1817 was extraordinarily deficient. The average price of wheat in the last two years of scarcity, 1812 and 1813, had been 126s. 6d. and 109s. 9d. a quarter; yet in 1817 it only reached 96s. 11d. a quarter, though for a short time in the spring of that year it rose to what Lord Fitzwilliam justly called "the extravagant price" of 120s. a quarter. After 1817 prices gradually fell, and it is

The hopes of the Farmers disappointed.

important to observe that *from* 1819 *to the present day the average price of wheat has never reached even that minimum which the Legislature promised to the Farmer in the Corn Law of* 1815. Nevertheless, the Farmers were still hopeful. They paid their exorbitant Rents and continued their expenditure of capital. Yet year by year prices continued to sink. The efforts of the Farmers to make up in quantity what they lost in price, only recoiled upon themselves, until in the year 1822, without having been exposed to foreign competition, they had brought wheat down to the price of 44s. 7d. a quarter. In the winter of 1821–22 wheat had actually sold at less than 40s. a quarter.* "The consequences of this state of things," says Lord Fitzwilliam,† "cannot have escaped recollection. Great difficulties had been felt by the agricultural interest in 1814, 1815, and 1816, but the difficulties of all former years were surpassed by the distress of the winter of 1821–22. The insolvency of Tenants at this period was unparalleled in the history of the agricultural classes; and the inefficiency of the Act of 1815 was so universally acknowledged that an alteration in the law was made in the Session of 1822; but the alteration being contingent on circumstances which never occurred, no permanent or practical change took place till the year 1828. During the whole period, therefore, from 1815 to 1828, the prohibitory system of 1815 was in virtual operation. Year after year the Farmer was deluded by fallacious hopes, excited by the law itself. His Rent was paid out of his capital and not out of his profits, till that capital became insufficient for the proper cultivation of the land."

Unexampled distress of the Farmers.

Lord Fitzwilliam, though, as a Landowner, at least a disinterested witness, was an avowed opponent of the Corn Laws. To obtain, therefore, unquestionable testimony of the effect of the Act of 1815, it is better to turn to the evidence given by Farmers themselves still clinging to Protection before a Protectionist Committee of the House of Commons in 1821.

Among the Parliamentary papers for 1822 occurs a "List of Petitions which have been presented to the

* See Preface to the fifth edition, pp. xxvii, xxviii.

† First Address to the Landowners of England, 1839.

House of Commons in the years 1820, 1821, and 1822 (up to March, 1822), complaining of agricultural distress." There were :—

1821. Parliamentary Inquiry into the Farmers' distress.

In 1820...	159	Petitions from Towns, Districts, Counties, &c.
In 1821...	187	
And in the first three months of 1822 ...	129	
Total	475 in 27 months.	

The petitions for 1822 show an increase of 175 per cent. over those for the previous year, and although it by no means follows that this is to be taken as a gauge of the growth of the distress, it indicates at least that the evidence given in the early part of 1821 does not measure the full height of the crisis. Yet that evidence draws a forcible picture of the Farmers' calamities. "Are you of opinion that Farmers in general, in your knowledge, have incurred a great loss of capital?"—"I have no question of it: a friend and neighbour of mine had occasion to newly arrange some estates, and new-let them. Two years since, on the death of his father, the Tenants got upon the estate—some, I am sorry to say, partly upon a borrowed capital. If a Distress was taken now (they cannot pay Rent, and I believe they will not be able the next Rent day), I am convinced those persons would be annihilated, inasmuch as they would have no capital left."*—"Within your knowledge, confining yourself to the county of Sussex, do you believe that the capital of the Farmer has decreased?"—"I can speak positively to my own capital being very considerably decreased; and I have every reason to believe it is so generally throughout the county."—"If these unfortunate times should continue, what must be the case with respect to the Farmer and his productions?"—"My opinion is that those who commenced farming within the last ten years with little capital must all give up their farms."†

Evidence of Farmers before the Parliamentary Committee.

Exhausted Capital.

"Is it not very difficult to collect Rates, from the poverty of the Farmers?"—"Excessively so: Warrants of Distress have never been issued without the greatest

Intolerable Rates.

* Mr. William Henning, Farmer, of Ilminster, Somersetshire.
† Mr. John Ellman, Farmer, of Glynde, Sussex.

pains, by the parish officers and magistrates, to collect the Rates without them."*

General rural distress.

"Are there many persons leaving their farms in consequence of distress in your neighbourhood? and what is the extent of the distress?"—"I believe it is only the hope of some relief being granted that at this time prevents hundreds from leaving their farms. A Farmer of forty years' standing has lately been distressed for Rent; another is now upon the parish who, but a little while ago, was worth £2,000, and hundreds with large families are on the very brink of ruin, and are obliged to mortgage the next crop of corn before they can gather in the same. The labourers are unemployed, the tradesman are applying to the parish for relief, the shopkeepers and manufacturers in large towns are without customers, except on credit."†

Estimates of Farmers' losses.

"At what period do you think your losses commenced?"—"I think from the year 1814."—"Down to the present time?"—"Yes."—"Can you at all estimate what your aggregate loss has been during that time altogether?"—"I think in the year 1813 I could have retired with £10,000 or £12,000, and now I should think not more than half the sum, at least not more than two-thirds."‡

The Corn Law of 1815 discovered to be a delusion.

"Farming is a most ruinous business. In my statement it appears that the Farmer is minus in the cultivation of 100 acres of arable land, at the present prices, £137 2s. 6d., or per acre per annum £1 7s. 5d. Since 1813 we have mostly been declining in circumstances. With respect to *the existing Corn Law*, the more I contemplate it the more I consider it a mere phantom, and *quite incompetent to afford any effectual relief to British agriculture.* It having been demonstrated to the Committees of the Lords and Commons that an average of 80s. per quarter for wheat was requisite to remunerate the British grower, it was, no doubt, the intention of the Legislature to grant Protection to that extent, though in its operation it will have no such effect. As the present law opens the British market to foreign grain for at least

* Mr. Thomas Barton, Clerk to the Magistrates, Battle, Sussex.
† Mr. Job Lousley, Farmer, of Blewberry, Berks.
‡ Mr. William Ilott, Farmer, of Abbey Milton, Dorsetshire.

six weeks, where the prices attain 80s. per quarter for wheat, 27s. for oats, 53s. for beans, and 40s. for barley, at the opening of the ports there is generally such an influx of foreign grain that wheat will speedily fall from 20s. to 30s. per quarter, and other grain in proportion. It is, therefore, sufficiently evident that *nothing but total prohibition, or a duty equivalent thereto, can re-establish confidence.*"* 1821.

"Are *the present Corn Laws* of any use to the Farmer?"—"Certainly they are not: they *are insufficient and ineffectual*, and were so from the beginning."†

Causes of the distress.

Such being the condition to which the Farmers were reduced, the evidence further shows how the Corn Laws operated to bring about this state of things. "What has the Rent of your farm increased from the year 1792?"—"The farm was let upon lease for twenty-one years, from Michaelmas, 1790, which ended in 1811. It was increased in 1811 from £680 per annum to £1,200"—*i.e.*, an increase of 76 per cent.—"When was the first abatement in rent?"—"The first abatement, to the best of my recollection, was in 1815. Three years after I took a fresh lease."—"To what amount was that?"—"£200 a year, reducing it to £1,000, the rent I now pay."‡ The total rise, therefore, between 1790 and 1815, after the depression had begun, was 47 per cent.

Rents.

"How long have you occupied this farm?"—"From the year 1796."—"Was it upon a lease?"—"Yes."—"For how many years!"—"The first was fifteen."—"From 1796 to 1811?"—"Yes."—"At what Rent?"—"£300 a year."—"At the expiration of the lease in 1811 did you take a fresh lease?"—"Yes."—"For what term?"—"Eleven years."—"At what rent?"—"£500 a year"—*i.e.*, at an increase of 66 per cent.§—"With regard to the payment of Rent at the last Michaelmas, when Rents are generally due in Kent, do you believe that any Farmers have paid that rent out of profit?"—"I do not know an instance where they have."—"Do you conceive the Tenantry in the county of Kent at this moment are in a state of solvency?"—"I think it very doubtful."‖

* Mr. William Stickney, Farmer, of Holderness, East Yorks.
† Mr. G. Webb Hall, Farmer, of Sneed Park, Gloucestershire.
‡ Mr. John Ellman, *supra*.
§ Mr. S. Capper, Farmer, of Pottern Manor, Wilts.
‖ Mr. John Lake, Farmer, of Bapchild, near Sittingbourne, Kent,

1815-22. Evidence at the Parliamentary Inquiry.

"Have the Farmers on the arable farms paid their Rents from the profits of their farms, or from their capital?"—"I have had the remark made by many most respectable Tenants that they are paying their rents out of their capital at the present moment."—"Do you see any chance of the condition of the Farmer being bettered?"—"Not unless the price of corn can be advanced."—"Can you point out any other means?"—"A reduction of his Rent and other outgoings."—"Have you the means of stating whether the Rents have increased very much within the last thirty years?"—"From 1796 to the present time they have increased double, or more."—"*Upon what calculation did you fix the Rent?*"—"*The average of wheat at* 10*s. a bushel.* . . . I have heard of particular cases where Landlords have asked more than the valuations, and I have heard of others putting them up to auction and very high Rents obtained." *

"What has been the increase of Rents from 1797 to 1813?"—"I think they are trebled."—"In what proportion do you suppose the charges of cultivation increased?"—"I am inclined to think the charges increased with the Rent." †

No doubt part of this rise was a rise upon the Tenant's own improvements certain to be imposed in a time of factitious competition. Of this, too, we have direct evidence. "To what extent have the Rents been raised during the period of the high prices?"—"I think considerably more than double; certainly more than double."—"Has there been any considerable outlay of capital to produce this rise of Rent?" "Yes; undoubtedly there has."—"Has not a considerable proportion of those advances of capital been made by the Tenants?"—"Yes; a very great deal of that has been laid out by the Tenants; no doubt of it."—"More than by the Landlord, do you conceive, with enclosures, draining, and so on?"—"I should think it had. I should think so, certainly." ‡

The guarantees of the Legislature were thus successful

* Mr. William Custance, of London, Receiver of Rents.
† Mr. E. Wakefield, of Essex, Land Valuer.
‡ Mr. John Iveson, Land Agent.

in stimulating Rents, but were impotent to maintain prices. The difference between expected prices and prices realised was thus, as in 1814, a measure of the Farmer's loss, though not, as will be seen, of his whole loss. "Do the present prices at which corn is selling (wheat 56s. 1d., barley 26s., oats 19s. 6d.) remunerate the Farmer for the expense of tillage, Poor Rates, and Rent?"—"I am certain they do not, in our neighbourhood, in the county of Sussex."—"Do you attribute the whole fall in the price of corn to the increased supply of corn or the decreased consumption?"—"It must be principally from the increased supply at market." *

1815-22. Evidence of Farmers at the Parliamentary Inquiry.

Fall of prices of corn through competition among Farmers themselves.

"Since 1814 all produce has been at a high price. How do you account for having sustained losses when the produce was at a high price?"—"Since 1814 it has only been a short time at a high price, or a remunerating price; not during the whole time."—"*At what price should wheat be to remunerate you in a proper way for growing it?*"—"*I think at 96s. a quarter.*" † Another witness says: "There is a depreciation in the average of all agricultural produce of nearly 31 per cent., and in those which the Farmer has most to depend upon of 40 per cent.; while the Poor Rate is advanced 82 per cent. and the Taxes 75 per cent., the price of labour is reduced only 12½ per cent." ‡

Fall of prices of meat through distress of manufacturing districts.

So far as meat was concerned, the decline in prices was due to the paralysis of trade and manufactures which was a common feature of the Protectionist system. Mr. Thomas Attwood, of Birmingham, put in a statement showing the decreased consumption of meat in the large towns of the Midlands in the years 1818–20.

Birmingham	decreased consumption		⅛	beef and	⅛	mutton.
Leeds	,,	,,	⅛	,,	⅛	,,
Sheffield	,,	,,	⅛	,,	⅛	,,
Walsall	,,	,,	⅛	,,	⅛	,,
Dudley	,,	,,	⅛	,,	slight	,,

"I think," added the witness, "these returns are calculated to show the distress of the manufacturing

* Mr. John Ellman, *suprà*.
† Mr. W. Ilott, *suprà*.
‡ Mr. R. C. Harvey, Farmer, of Alburgh, Norfolk.

1815-22. districts, and the effect which the diminution of consumption in those districts must necessarily have on the sales and prosperity of the agricultural classes." To this cause of slackness is to be added the fact that, as the evidence shows, the Farmers were rapidly diminishing their stock of cattle under the pressure, and were thus overdoing the markets. Since the Farmers were crushed by their Rents, and unaided by remunerative prices, it was not to be wondered at that those in dependence upon them sank into destitution. The Poor Rates increased notably—an increase, it is only fair to recognise, due in part to the injudicious encouragement to population afforded by the old Poor Law. "From your observation among the working classes, is their situation better or worse?"—"I consider the labourers employed in agriculture to be considerably worse off than they were five or ten years ago."*

Increasing destitution of labouring classes.

"To what cause do you attribute the labourers being much out of employment?"—"The principal cause is the inability of the Farmers to pay them their wages."†—"Can you give any reason for the number of persons thrown out of employ?"—"Certainly; the inability of the Farmers to pay them. I could in three or four days bring forward a thousand able-bodied labourers who have no employment."‡

Enormous rise of Poor Rates.

"Can you state to the Committee whether your Poor Rates are in general high in your part of the county?"—"*The Poor Rates* probably have in the last twenty-five years *increased in a threefold degree.*"§—"In the year 1819 the Poor Rates were increased enormously, at least one-third; and it may be remarked that the decrease in the year 1820 in not any favourable symptom, as there would most likely have been a greater number out of employ than ever, had not the farmers agreed to take each a share of the unemployed men and pay them out of their own pockets; and in dividing them it amounted to about one man to every fifty acres, who are a most heavy burden on their hands. In the year 1818 I

* Mr. John Ellman, *suprà*.
† Mr. S. Capper, *suprà*.
‡ Mr. T. Barton, *suprà*.
§ Mr. Thomas Orton, Farmer, of March, in the Isle of Ely.

occupied about 200 acres of land at Hagbourne, and although I employed my usual number of labourers and paid them in full, yet my Poor Rates in that year amounted to the enormous sum of £121, or 12s. an acre."* Mr. Harvey was obliged to employ fifty labourers on a farm of 1,400 acres, "to keep them off the parish." Evidence at the Parliamentary Inquiry of 1821-22.

Mr. William Ilott put in evidence a statement of Poor Rates in the parish of Dowlesh, Dorsetshire, from 1814 to 1820 (shillings and pence omitted):—

1814—15	... ...	£232
1815—16	... ...	318
1816—17	... ...	307
1817—18	... ...	423
1818—19	... ...	324
1819—20	... ...	457

increase, 97 per cent.

A statement was put in by the Chairman of the Committee, which presents an almost incredible picture of agricultural pauperism. It was an extract from a Report of a Committee of the Guardians of the poor, for forty-four Parishes within the Hundred of Blything, Suffolk, showing the amount paid for able workmen unemployed (shillings and pence omitted).

From Easter	1814	to Easter	1815	£5.
,, ,,	1815	,,	1816	1,384, increase 27,680 per cent.
,, ,,	1816	,,	1817	2,704, increase 95 per cent.

These were years of comparatively cheap corn, when the Farmers were therefore in straits. Yet the extraordinary increase between Easter, 1815, and Easter, 1816, seems to point to some new disposition of the returns. This does not, however, appear in the witness's evidence. "Will you be so good as to account for the very great increase?"—"Because of the increase in the number of persons thrown out of employment."—"Were they agricultural labourers or otherwise?"—"Entirely agricultural."—"Do you happen to know whether the result was the same in the parishes adjoining?"—"*I believe they increased in a much greater proportion*, because I believe that the poor are much better managed in these The growth of agricultural distress increased with the Corn Law of 1815.

* Mr. J. Lousley, *supra*.

1816. Wholesale rural pauperism. Riots. Incendiarism.

incorporated Hundreds than they are in the neighbouring Hundreds, where they are not incorporated."—At the end of March, 1816, Mr. Brand declared in Parliament of the agricultural population that "the poor, in many cases, abandoned their own residences. Whole parishes had been deserted, and the crowd of paupers, increasing in numbers as they went from parish to parish, spread wider and wider this awful desolation." "In Suffolk nightly fires of incendiaries began to blaze in every district, threshing machines were broken or burnt in open day; mills were attacked. At Brandon, near Bury, large bodies of labourers assembled to prescribe a maximum price of grain and meat, and to pull down the houses of butchers and bakers. They bore flags with the motto, 'Bread or blood.' At Bury and at Norwich disturbances of a similar nature were quickly repressed. But the most serious demonstration of the spirit of the peasantry arose in what is called the Isle of Ely. . . . Early in the Session Mr. Western described the agricultural distress of this district as exceeding that of most other parts of the kingdom. Executions upon the property of the cultivators, distresses for Rent, insolvencies, farms untenanted, were the symptoms of this remarkable depression. . . . In the Fen countries the temptation of immediate profit had more than commonly led the Farmer to raise exhausting crops. . . . The high prices of wheat from 1810 to 1814 had supplied this temptation."*

Retrogression of agriculture.

No resources could withstand such a congeries of burdens, and as the Farmers suffered, their land fell back. "From your long experience are you of opinion that the agriculture of the country has advanced or deteriorated within the last three years?"—"I conceive it to be very considerably deteriorated."†

Mr. Rodwell, a Farmer and Land Agent in Suffolk, said "there was not then one-tenth part of the beasts fattening upon corn and oilcake there had been a few years before." Mr. Harvey‡ spoke of reductions of stock, growing less turnips, and much double-cropping. Farmers were

* Martineau's "History of the Peace," Book I., ch. iv.
† Mr. J. Ellman, *suprà*.
‡ *Suprà*.

catching at a straw, and desirous of getting all they could in a year.

A Farmer's Balance Sheet under Protection.

Mr. Lake* handed in an account, a specimen, it is to be feared, of the balance-sheets of most Farmers during these years.

"Losses sustained on three Holdings of Land, the principal part of arable; all in most excellent condition, and carried on with the greatest economy, and without even a riding horse on either."

			Acres.	Rents. £	Loss. £ s. d.
No. 1.	A great part Tithe free	1819	500	1,130	242 16 8
	The same... ...	1820	—	—	769 16 4
No. 2.	All liable to Tithe ...	1819	126	150	79 0 0
	The same... ...	1820	—	—	302 9 10½
No. 3.	About ¾ths Tithe free...	1819	350	508	186 15 0
	The same... ...	1820	—	—	414 12 5
	£1,788 / 2		976	1,788	1,995 10 3½

Rent paid ...£3,576—Loss £ 1,995 s. 10 d. 3½

Report of the Select Committee of 1821-22.

The Report of the Select Committee which received this impressive evidence, so confirmatory of the experience of the years prior to 1814, and so illustrative of the anticipations of Lord Grenville and the Free Traders, showed that the belief as to the advantages of Protection with which they had entered upon the inquiry, had sustained a complete shock. They saw that the total prohibition advocated by some of the witnesses as the sole remedy was impossible in an overflowing population. Stringent Protection had served but to bring ruin upon the Farmers, who yet were unprepared to welcome a relaxation. The Committee, therefore, were unable to recommend any specific remedy, but they embodied in their Report some observations which are noteworthy as being the earliest symptoms of conversion to Free Trade in Corn of an influential section of the House of Commons.

"It is with deep regret that your Committee have to commence their Report by stating that, in their judgment, the complaints of the petitioners are founded in fact, in so far as they represent that, at the present price of corn,

* *Suprà.*

the returns to the occupier of an arable farm, after allowing for the interest of his investment, are by no means adequate to the charges and outgoings; of which *a considerable proportion can be paid only out of the capitals, and not from the profits, of the Tenantry.*

Farm Rents paid out of capital.

"This pressure upon the Farmer is stated by some of the witnesses to have materially affected the retail business of shopkeepers in country towns connected with the agricultural districts. . . . .

"The opinion of your Committee, in respect to the present pressure upon the Tenantry, is formed upon the best documentary evidence which the nature of the case admits of, confirmed by the testimony of many respectable witnesses, as well occupiers of land as surveyors and land agents; and it is further strengthened by a comparison of the difference between the existing price and the average price of the last ten years, the period within which most of the present engagements, affecting the Tenant of the soil, may be supposed to have been contracted. If the present price could, under all the present circumstances, be remunerative, the average price of that period must have afforded an excessive profit, which does not appear probable, nor warranted by facts.

"It is no more than an act of justice to the Tenantry of Great Britain to state that, so far as your Committee have been able to ascertain, *the Rents*, with some exceptions in particular districts, *have hitherto been collected*, without more arrear than has occurred on several former occasions. *This punctuality*, whilst it is highly honourable to the character of the Tenantry, *affords* (your Committee trust) *a ground of hope that the great body of the occupiers of the soil, either from the savings of more prosperous times*, or from that credit which punctuality will generally command in this country, *possess resources* which will enable them to surmount the difficulties under which they now labour.

Did monopoly benefit the Farmer?

"The ruinously low prices of agricultural produce at this moment cannot be ascribed to any deficiency in the protecting power of the law. *Protection cannot be carried further than monopoly.* This monopoly the British grower has enjoyed for the produce of the two last harvests; the ports (with the exception of the ill-timed

and unnecessary importation of oats during six weeks of the last summer) having been uninterruptedly shut against all foreign import for nearly thirty months.

. . . . . .

"Your Committee may entertain a doubt (a doubt however, which they wish to state with that diffidence which a subject so extensive naturally imposes upon their judgment) whether the only solid foundation of the flourishing state of agriculture is not laid in abstaining, as much as possible, from interference, either by Protection or Prohibition, with the application of capital in any branch of industry? Whether all fears for the decline of agriculture, either from temporary vicissitudes to which all speculations are liable, or from the extension of other pursuits of general industry,* are not, to a great extent, imaginary? Whether commerce can expand,

* An argument was at this time in vogue in favour of Protection to agriculture which is occasionally employed now. Adam Smith ("Wealth of Nations," Book II., ch. v.) distinguished agriculture from other industries on the ground that in the former "nature labours along with man," rent representing the surplus value thus gratuitously added. It followed, then, that capital employed in agriculture was more beneficial to the community than employed to other investments. From this it is a short step to the position that it is to the advantage of the State to encourage the application to agriculture of capital which might otherwise be employed elsewhere. This step was taken by Malthus in his "Grounds of an Opinion on the Policy of restricting the Importation of Foreign Corn (1815)," and in other of his writings. Adam Smith's view, of course, descends from that of the Physiocrats, of whom he says that "in representing the labour which is employed upon land as the only productive labour, the notions which it inculcates are perhaps too narrow and confined" (Book IV., ch. ix.) The same criticism may be applied to his modification of that original. The forces of nature, gravity, elasticity, wind, temperature, yield a no less gratuitous co-operation to capital invested in manufacture or commerce. Indeed, if a comparison is to be instituted between the productiveness of agricultural and industrial capital, the former must take the last place, as is pointed out by Ricardo in his chapter "On Rent" (Principles of Political Economy," chap. ii.), for the law of diminishing returns does not hold good of industry. Roscher here agrees with Ricardo. "A large ship transports in proportion more cheaply than a small one: the horse-power in a large steam-engine is cheaper than in a small one. On the other hand, the active forces of the soil in agriculture are exhaustible: their productivity declines, as a rule, proportionally with the intensiveness of their exploitation. As rent rests upon this difference in cost of production, this fact speaks indeed, not of a superiority of agriculture over the other branches of industry, but rather of a definite though unavoidable inferiority. The rent is no accretion, but only a portion of the national income. The more the landlords receive, the less do the capitalists and labourers." W. Roscher, "Ueber Kornhandel und Theuerungspolitik," Stuttgart, 1852.

manufactures thrive, and great public works be undertaken without furnishing to the skill and labour which the capitals they employ put in motion, increased means of paying for the production of the land? Whether the principal part of those productions which contribute to the gratification of the wants and desires of the different classes of the community must not necessarily be drawn from our own soil, the demand increasing with the population, as the population must increase with the riches of the country? Whether a great part of the same capital which is employed in supporting the industry connected with manufactures, commerce, and public works, does not, passing by a very rapid course into the hands of the occupier of the soil, serve also as a capital for the encouragement of agriculture? Whether in our own country in former times, and in other naturally fertile countries up to the present time, agriculture has not languished from the want of such a stimulus? and whether, in these countries, the proprietors of land are not themselves poor and the people wretched in proportion as, from want of capital, their labour is more exclusively confined to raising from their own soil the means of their own scanty subsistence?

"If these questions should be answered in the affirmative, it follows that the present solidity and future improvement of our national wealth depend on the continuance of that union by which our agricultural prosperity is so closely connected with the preserving of our manufacturing and commercial greatness."

The Committee concludes its Report by expressing its regret at being unable to point to specific remedial measures, especially in the direction of further Protection.

The public, who had not studied the evidence, and the mass of the Farmers, who were unable to interpret its teaching, showed no disposition to concur with the unpopular doctrines of the Select Committee. Yet, as some change was necessary, a statute was passed in 1822 reducing the limit of prices at which importations could take place to 70s. for wheat, 35s. for barley, 25s. for oats. Behind this ostensible relaxation, however, ranged a new scale of import duties, by which foreign grain was subject to heavy three-month duties up to a price of 85s., to a duty of

17s. when wheat was at 70s., of 12s. when between 70s. and 80s., and of 10s. when at 85s. It happened that prices continued too low for this measure to come into operation, but its enactment is an indication how little had been learned by agriculturists from the trials of the preceding years.

Continued distress of Farmers. Violent fluctuations in the price of wheat.

Save the general abatement of Rents, which were swallowing up the whole produce of the land, no change took place for many years after the inquiry of 1821–22 to improve the condition of the Farmers. They were existing on the sufferance of their Landlords. So far from being maintained at the expected 80s. a quarter, wheat averaged for the ten years 1820–29 58s. 5d. per quarter;* yet there were violent and ruinous fluctuations. Thus the competition stimulated by promised high prices doubled the supply of wheat, and in 1822 the fall of price since 1817 was 54 per cent. Seven years later a rise of 53 per cent. occurred, to be followed in 1835 by a fall of 41 per cent., succeeded again in three years by a rise of 64 per cent. These fluctuations were, of course, in reciprocal relation to the extensions and contractions of the wheat area, alternating according to the hopes or apprehensions of the Farmer. The sliding scale enacted in 1829 only served to accentuate these movements, and to the uncertainty of an industry necessarily dependent upon the seasons were added the oscillations of the Exchange. By the Corn Law of 1829 64s. took the place of 80s., the price guaranteed by the Legislature in 1815. Below 64s. a prohibitory duty of 23s. 8d. was imposed; between 64s. and 69s. this was reduced to 16s. 8d.; and when the price exceeded 73s. the import duty was the nominal sum of 1s. a quarter. The effect of this was, of course, to convert the Farmer's trade into a rampant speculation; and at the moment when the rise of prices was about to reward him for the penury of years an influx of foreign wheat would lower the value of his crops 25 per cent.†

The Corn Law of 1829.

* The disproportion between the average prices experienced in the two divisions of time (1811–21 and 1821–31) was not so great in reality as in appearance, owing to the depreciation of the currency in the former decade; but still, when full allowance has been made for this consideration, it will be found that the fall of price was nearly 25 per cent. (Cp. note to p. 5.)

† The same phenomena have been observed in France since the

1827-30. Acute agricultural distress.

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that agricultural distress seemed a permanent condition of things. In 1827, in a single newspaper published at Norwich there were 120 advertisements of sales of farming stock in one day. The distress of the country was referred to in the Speech from the Throne in 1830, and in the autumn of that year alarming riots broke out in the agricultural districts, which were, in fact, occasioned by the abuses of the Poor Law, and aggravated by general high prices and universally inadequate wages. Landowners themselves were suffering, being obliged by their Tenants' insolvency to abate their excessive Rents by 20, 30, or 40 per cent., and yet then, in many districts, they had large tracts of country on their hands. Since all the conditions productive of distress continued their virulent operation, Rents, despite abatements, being maintained at their artificial level, and Poor Rates mounting to an appalling height, as time went on the state of the Farmers grew worse. In 1832 the Poor Rates in the following agricultural counties, *levied on each head* of the population, were as under:—

The burden of the Poor Rate. 1822-33.

	s.	d.		s.	d.
Berkshire ...	16	8	Kent	15	2
Dorsetshire ...	11	7	Sussex	20	11
Essex	17	6	Wiltshire ...	16	7

Corn Law of March, 1887, imposing a duty of 8s. 8d. a quarter. The competition promoted amongst the Farmers flooded the market with native grain just after the harvest; when rents had to be met and expenses were at their maximum. "The most needy, who more than others need protecting, realise the soonest and at any price," says M. Guyot. According to a table published by him of comparative prices of wheat in Paris and London in 1887, after the passing of the Protectionist Law, the difference between the highest and lowest prices from April to November 19th in Paris was 4f. 15c. per 100 kilogrammes; in London, no more than 3f. 05c. But the fluctuations in France were at that time mitigated by four causes:—1. The general fall of prices. 2. The continuance of the importation of untaxed wheat from Algeria, which came in to the amount of 1,182,000 cwts. in 1886. 3. The abundant harvest of 1887. 4. The importation of bread untaxed, which, during the first seven months of 1887, nearly tripled the importations of the corresponding months of the preceding year. As soon as the wheat harvest of France and Algeria is deficient the fluctuations which have already manifested themselves will be highly accentuated. It must be remembered that English Protectionists do not propose to tolerate either the first or the last of these mitigations. In M. Guyot's opinion, the price of wheat in 1887 was also kept down by speculative importations excited by anticipations of a rise, and which resulted in loss to the speculators.

The burden upon the Farmers must therefore have been infinitely greater. In the manufacturing counties of Lancashire and Yorkshire (West Riding), Cornwall, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, and Staffordshire, on the other hand, Poor Rates varied from 4s. 8d. to 6s. 10d. per head only. The average payment for the whole population was 9s. 11½d. per head. The pauperism of those labourers who were fortunate enough to find employment as contrasted with the wealth conferred upon the Landlords by the Corn Laws was well sketched in a broadside circulated in 1826, but not less true in 1832.

"THE REAL CAUSE OF THE DISTRESSED CONDITION OF ALL CLASSES—A FEW PLAIN QUESTIONS TO A LANDOWNER.

How many acres does your estate consist of?—10,000.

What was it let for forty years ago (1786)?—10s. per acre, or £5,000.

How much do you receive now (1826)?—30s. per acre, or £15,000.

How many farms have you upon it?—Fifty.

How many labourers do they employ?—About 500.

What was the price of wheat forty years ago (1786)?—4s. a bushel.

What is the price of wheat now (1826)?—8s. per bushel.

What was the price of labour in 1786?—8s. a week.

What is the price of labour now (1826)?—8s.; the same.

Then the labourers lose by the present system one bushel of wheat per week?—Yes; they do.

What is the loss to the labourer in money now the bushel of wheat is 8s.?—£20 16s. a year each.

Then the 500 labourers employed on your estate lose £200 a week?—Yes.

And their loss yearly amounts to £10,400?—Exactly so.

And the shopkeepers in the neighbourhood lose customers to the same amount?—Yes.

And the wholesale traders who supply the shopkeepers lose in the same proportion?—They do.

And the manufacturers also are deprived of a market for their goods in the same ratio?—Certainly they are.

Continued distress of Farmers. Another Parliamentary inquiry.

Then all classes must be in distress in consequence?—Most assuredly, in great distress."

In 1833, the Speech from the Throne having again specified the distress of agriculture, it was determined once more to resort to Parliament for a remedy, and a Select Committee was appointed to inquire into the subject.

Report of the Select Committee on Agricultural Distress, 1833.

The Report of this Committee is especially instructive, both because it reviews the fortunes of the Farmers since the investigation of 1822, and, as was the case with the Committee of that year, is unable to prescribe a cure. It shows that during the intervening period of thirteen years agricultural distress had been deepening. The Report runs as follows:—

REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS APPOINTED TO INQUIRE INTO THE STATE OF AGRICULTURE, 1833.

"On looking back at the report of the Committee in 1821, to whom the Petitions complaining of the depressed state of agriculture of the United Kingdom were referred, it will be found that the Report commences by stating that the complaints of the Petitioners are founded in fact, in so far as they represent that *at the present price of corn* the returns to the occupier of an arable farm, after allowing for the interest of his investment, are by no means adequate to the charges and outgoings, of which a considerable proportion can be paid only out of the capitals and not out of the profits of the Tenantry. The average price of wheat for the year 1821 was 54s. 5d. per quarter. The average price of the present year is 53s. 1d., and although some of the charges connected with general taxation have been reduced since 1821, yet the local burthens, such as Poor Rate and County Rate, have in most parts of England been grievously augmented. The Committee of 1821 arrived at the conclusion 'that the returns of farming capital were at that time considerably below the ordinary rate of profit,' and no evidence adduced before your Committee of diminished outgoings, contrasted with the change of prices in the interval, would warrant, at this moment, a different conclusion.

"The Committee of 1821 express a hope 'that the great body of the occupiers of the soil, either from the savings of more prosperous times, or from the credit which punctuality commands in this country, possess resources which will enable them to surmount the difficulties under which they now labour.' Your Committee, with deep regret, are bound rather to express a fear that the difficulties alone remain unchanged, but that the savings are either gone or greatly exhausted, the credit failing, and the *resources* being *generally exhausted.* The Committee of 1821 assumed what they believed to be then true, that 'the annual produce of corn, the growth of the United Kingdom, was upon an average crop about equal to the annual consumption.' Your Committee have formed a decided opinion that the produce of Great Britain is, in the average of years, unequal to the consumption, that the increased supply from Ireland does not cover the deficiency, and that, in the present state of agriculture, the United Kingdom is in years of ordinary production partly dependent on the supply of wheat from foreign countries.

"Your Committee have already glanced at the increase of certain outgoings borne by the Farmer, which it is clearly established in evidence have not been compensated by a corresponding reduction of his fixed money payments; on the contrary, while the profitable returns from land have generally decreased, the burthens to which it is subjected have been augmented. The Poor Rate is heavier; the County Rate is heavier; the Highway Rate has increased; and this evidence would lead to the conclusion that the outgoings of the Farmer are generally larger than he can afford to pay during the present prices of agricultural produce, without a sacrifice of the profit on his capital which he is entitled to realise. Your Committee are of opinion that the present reluctance to purchase land, or to take it on lease, is to be ascribed to losses recently sustained in agriculture.

"The present price of Meat, as compared with Corn, is high; but this has been in a great measure attributed to an extensive loss in the flocks of sheep, occasioned by rot, which recently prevailed amongst them for two or three years consecutively.

"In conclusion, your Committee avow their opinion that hopes of amelioration in the condition of the Landed Interest rest rather on the cautious forbearance than on the active interposition of Parliament."

Such is the picture of the condition of agriculture under the laws which had been specially enacted for its assistance, drawn by a Committee not yet converted, as their Report shows, to the abolition of a system proved so disastrous. Since the inquiry of 1822, the Farmers, it would seem, had been yearly brought nearer ruin. Rents had been maintained at speculative heights, yet prices had fallen despite the restrictions on importation; the Poor Rates had continued to grow, yet the Farmers were obliged to employ an increasing quantity of superfluous labour to keep able-bodied men off the parish; wages were being paid out of capital, and the tradesmen and manufacturers, the Farmers' customers, were being continuously impoverished. These are results described by witnesses not hostile to the Corn Laws, the popular movement against which had not as yet begun. The following extracts from their evidence disclose unmistakably the extent and disaster of the Farmers' ruin:—

Extracts from Evidence given before the Select Committee on Agricultural Distress, 1833.

The Farmers' distress, 1822-33.

"With respect to the condition of the Farmers, their capital is diminishing, I think considerably, in every part of the country. The Tenant cannot lay out money in improving the land; he has not the means."*

Exhaustion of the Farmers' resources.

"Supposing a Tenant were sold up in Scotland, what proportion of capital would be left, in your opinion?"—"Perhaps none. In general a large proportion of his means goes to the Landlord; the remainder is equally divided among his other creditors."†

"You say that a good many Farmers, if sold up, would have nothing left; do you apply that to prudent Farmers, and well acquainted with their business?"—"I apply that to hard-working, honest, industrious men."

* 216-17. Mr. Adam Murray, Farmer and Land Agent, of East Lothian.

† 2,886. Mr. T. Oliver, Farmer, of Midlothian.

—"Do you speak of Farmers who had an adequate capital to stock the land, at one time?"—"Yes."*

"Supposing 100 Farmers to be taken indiscriminately from the district of which you are speaking (Doncaster), and to be sold up, how many of those, do you think, would have anything left?"—"I should think half the smaller Farmers—Tenants renting from 50 to 150 acres —would be insolvent."†

"You say a large portion of the Farmers are at present insolvent, and that they have been sinking in their condition: what diminution of existing Rents would, in your opinion, put them in the case of living comfortably, with that reasonable profit that you think a Tenant should make?"—"I am of opinion that it must require a great reduction of Rent or much better times, that if there were better times there need not be much reduction."—"What you mean by 'better times' is better prices?"—"Yes; everything seems to stand still."‡

"I know several Farms where there have been three Tenants who have become paupers."—"Each going in as a Farmer upon the Farm, and carrying capital in?"—"Yes, sufficient to stock it."—"Each losing every shilling?"—"Yes, and becoming workers on the road." —"Did you say that throughout the Weald of Kent and Sussex there is scarcely a solvent Farmer?"—"There is scarcely that description of Farmer."—"Are you speaking of the men that had once capital to stock their own farms?"—"Yes, well."§

"Have you made your rent fairly from your land?" —"No. I have not done that upon the average; many years I have lost a great deal of money."—"It has been a losing occupation?"—"Yes; with many others besides myself, to a very great extent."‖

"What is the general state of the farming interest of the county?"—"I consider that the Farmers are very

* 7,388-9. Mr. Richard Peyton, Land Agent in Essex, Surrey, Sussex, Kent.

† 3,127. Mr. William Simpson, Farmer and Land Valuer, of Loversall, near Doncaster.

‡ 12,531-2. Mr. William Smith, Farmer, of Swarlston Lows, Derby.

§ 12,778-9. Mr. George Smallpiece, Farmer and Landowner, of Cobham, Surrey.

‖ 10,507-8. Mr. J. Hallard, Farmer, of Worcester.

much impoverished, and the labourers are unemployed, except where the Landlords exert themselves to make substantial improvements."

"Has that long been the condition of the Farmer?"—"It has been gradually arising and increasing."

"Do you consider that Farmers generally have lost their capital?"—"Very much so." *

"The condition of the Farmers—is that better, stationary, or worse?"—"It is not better, and certainly worse than in 1818." †

"Has the capital of the Farmers in the district you speak of been greatly diminished of late years?"—"Yes, greatly diminished."

"Have a great number of them been ruined entirely?"—"A great many." ‡

Similar evidence could be indefinitely multiplied. The witnesses, from whatever part of the country they come, testify to the same state of things, that the condition of the Farmers—to say nothing of the agricultural labourers—has been for years steadily deteriorating. The causes specified as at work to produce this result—all, it must be remembered, subject to the operation of productive restrictions upon importation of food and goods—were manifold. The sum and substance of them, however, was that the outgoings of the Farmer, notably his Rent, were too high, and, despite the promise of the Corn Laws, prices were too low and the demand for his produce too slack. The poverty of the labourers in the agricultural districts, the relief of which fell upon the Farmers' shoulders, was appalling. "The farmers suffer now, you say, with their present Rent?"—"They merely make observations upon it, but those observations apply more to the increased Poor Rates, because in those parts (Sussex) the Poor Rates are exceedingly high—from 15s. to 20s. in the £."—"Do you state that 15s. in the £ is the average Poor Rate of this land in Sussex that you have been speaking of?"—"Perhaps it may not be the average, because we have nineteen parishes there; but I

Excessive burden of Poor Rates.

* 8,297-8,304. Mr. J. B. Turner, of Leominster, Farmer and Landowner.

† 2,141. Mr. R. Wright, of Norwich, Land Agent.

‡ 6,508-9. Mr. William Taylor, Farmer, of Gillingham, Kent.

should think it would be very nearly that, say from 13s. to 15s.; certainly in many cases it is 19s.; there is nothing lower than 11s. I should say the average might be from 13s. to 15s."—"Upon two-thirds of the Rent?"—"No. In many cases the assessment is higher than the Rent; and this happens in a great many cases."—"Has it happened to you to hear that the crimes of poaching, robbery, and so on, have been on the increase in the agricultural districts of late years?"—"Yes, I think that is the case."—"What do you consider to have been the cause?"—"Want of employment, and want of means on the part of the Farmers to employ them." *

"Are there more paupers than there used to be?"—"Yes, a great many more." †

Desperation of the labourers. Wages extorted by incendiarism.

"Has the custom of giving able-bodied men relief from the Poor Rates grown up within the last three or four years?"—"Very much so."—"Have you had any fires in your neighbourhood?"—"Yes, in the neighbourhood, but not in the district that I manage."—"Do you think that the relief which is given out of the Poor Rates, or the wages, which you say are higher than the Farmers can pay, are paid under intimidation; in any degree, or voluntarily?"—"They have been paid under intimidation."—"Does that observation apply to the payment out of the Rate?"—"Not out of the Rate: the men were paid by the Farmer more money for the same work performed, in consequence of the intimidation arising out of the fear of fires."—"Has that fear which has extorted this higher payment arisen within the last three years?"—"Yes, since the almost general discontent in the labouring population showed itself." ‡

"If the wages of labour have not fallen to the effective labourer, and the Farmer be forced to maintain the non-effective one by his contribution to the Rate, does not that go far to explain the diminution of his capital and his distress?"—"To a certain degree it may, for while he employs his full portion of labour, he has to contribute to the surplus he does not want." §

* 11,869, &c. Mr. E. Driver, Land Agent, Sussex.

† 5,329. Mr. John Neve, Land Agent, of Tenterden, Kent.

‡ 9,542-52. Mr. John Cooper, Land Agent, Pottersbury, Northamptonshire.

§ 935-6. Mr. Richard Webb, Land Agent and Farmer, Wiltshire.

"Are the Poor Rates much increased of late years?" —"I think they must have increased, within the last five or six years, one-fourth."*

This steady increase of the Poor Rate was not the sole measure of the pressure upon the Farmer of the starving rural population. In the vain endeavour to check this swelling item of expenditure, the Farmers all over the country voluntarily imposed upon themselves "Labour Rates," by which the able-bodied poor of a parish were distributed amongst them for employment. The effect of this was that the Farmer made work for surplus labour instead of supporting it in absolute idleness, and, after all, since the wages thus paid for an inadequate equivalent were naturally insufficient to sustain life, they were necessarily supplemented from the parochial funds. The employment found by the Farmer was an unremunerative expenditure which every year subtracted from his declining capital. "You do not think that wages have fallen in proportion to the price of produce where labourers are employed?"—"No."—"Is that state of things likely to continue?"—"It must continue, for there is no remedy: if I do not pay them they must be paid out of the Poor Rates: they must be sustained." —"Is that not breaking down the capital of the Farmer?" —"Certainly."†

The Farmers' distress, 1822-33.

"Do you think Farmers are paying wages in proportion to the profits they gain?"—"No. I think they are out of proportion to the profits."—"Do you think they are paying them out of capital?"—"I think they are."‡ —"Can Farmers go on paying these wages?"—"They cannot go on; they must be using their property."— "What will be the end of that?"—"Ruin."§ On the other hand, it was no less "ruin" if the Farmers refused these so-called wages. The evidence is overwhelming that the Farmer, by these alms, purchased the safety of his family and his property. "You think a further reduction of wages would be inconsistent with the peace of the district?"—"Yes."‖

* 5,681-2. Mr. John Crampe, Farmer, of Garlinge, Isle of Thanet.
† 2,980. Mr William Simpson, of Loversall, Doncaster, Farm and Land Valuer. ‡ 5,202-3. Mr. J. Neve, Land Agent, Tenterden, Kent.
§ 6,388-9. Mr. W. Taylor, Farmer, of Gillingham, Kent.
‖ 9,907. Mr. C. Osborn, of Havant, Hants.

"To what do you ascribe the rise of wages within the last few years?"—"In several instances in consequence of intimidation. There was a strong recommendation from the magistrates of our county."—"What was that recommendation in consequence of?"—"In my opinion, from intimidation."* Rise of wages extorted by incendiarism.

"There have been a good many fires in Kent?"—"I know an instance in the county of Kent in which a man reduced the wages of his labourers, and his premises were burnt down in consequence. The wages are kept up in many instances in consequence of intimidation."†

Even the high prices promised by the Corn Law would have been insufficient to meet such demands as these. But, in point of fact, the operation of the law for protecting the Farmers' interest, passed in 1829, had been no less prejudicial than the measure which it repealed. In 1829 the Farmer had been still unconvinced by the failure of 1815. He had not learned to see the fact lucidly stated by Mr. Oliver, Farmer, of Midlothian, in 1833, that "the Corn Law is the Landlord's matter alone. Where it is settled under an erroneous impression, when the scale is regulated under the expectation that it will secure 70s. a quarter and it realises only 65s., Farmers sustain a heavy loss, and matters are not adjusted, perhaps, until the Tenant has become embarrassed, and has lost part of his capital. It seems a matter of perfect indifference to the Farmer whether he sells at 60s., with a Rent adjusted to that price, or at 120s., with a correspondingly high Rent."‡

The Corn Law of 1829 led the Farmer to believe that 64s. would be the normal price of wheat. The inevitable consequence was a readjustment of Rent to that price. Unfortunately for the Farmer, prices were beyond the control of the Corn Law. The prices of wheat for ten years after the Act of 1829 were:— The Corn Law of 1829 a delusion and a snare.

1830.	1831.	1832.	1833.	1834.	1835.	1836.	1837.	1838.	1839.
s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
64 3	66 4	58 8	52 11	46 2	39 4	48 6	55 10	64 7	70 8

During the first four years the price of corn had

* 982,6. Mr. R. Webb, Land Agent and Farmer, Wiltshire.
† 7,308,9. Mr. R. Peyton, Land Agent, *supra*.
‡ 2,841.

Protection responsible for the Farmers' distress.

exceeded the expected minimum by 3d. in 1830 and 2s. 4d. in 1831, but had fallen below it by 5s. 4d. in 1832 and 11s. 1d. in 1833, and at this latter price was still only at the commencement of its decline. On the first five years, then, taken together, the Farmer had been the loser, by the fall of prices alone, of 13s. for every quarter of corn raised by him. The *excessive height of Rents thus artificially produced* by a law which professed to be for his benefit is testified to by witness after witness as *the main cause of the prevalent insolvency.*

It enhanced Rents.

"Do you think there is an understanding in the country that the present Corn Law tends to keep up prices?"—"They did expect in the year 1828–29 it would have that effect."*

"The Committee understand you to say that the Farmers generally upon the good land are paying from 10–15 per cent. too high Rent: how is it that there is no distress except among the tenants of bad lands?"—"Those Farmers are enabled to bear that loss, but they cannot support it: they have some capital, and they are paying most of those Rents out of their capital. The small Farmers, and those who are living upon and have poor lands, are in very great distress and unable to pay the Rent at this moment."†

"If the prices realised permanently remain ranging from 50s. to 54s., and the landlords hold them to their engagements, can the tenants go on without insolvency?"—"I conceive not without a loss of profits or capital, or perhaps insolvency, taking the aggregate of the farms."‡ "*Rents have not fallen so fast as prices.*§ "Speaking of the circle round Doncaster, can the Rents now generally paid be maintained if the present prices continue?"—"Certainly not; they are much higher than the present prices."—"How much higher should you say they are than the present scale for paying Rents?"—"I should think some 20 per cent."‖

"To what extent should you say that Rents were now

* 2,912. Mr. Oliver, *suprà.*
† 6,232,5. Mr. J. Lee, of Malpas, Cheshire.
‡ 11,435. Mr. D. Low, Professor of Agriculture, Edinburgh.
§ 5,018. Mr. J. W. Peters, Farmer, of South Petherton, Somersetshire.
‖ 2,950, 1. Mr. W. Simpson, Farmer and Land Valuer, of Loversall, near Doncaster.

too high generally in Worcestershire, with regard to the present scale of prices?"—"From 10 to 20 per cent."* "The Farmers are disposed to take a Rent which is improvident."†

Farmers' distress, 1822-33.

"You state that the Tenants have become destitute of capital: can you assign the cause?"—"I suppose their want of remunerating price for their produce."—"You state that a great many of them are in arrear?"—"Yes."—"Suppose the Landlords were to be hard-hearted and to call in those arrears, what would be the condition of the Tenants?"—"They would half of them come upon the Poor Rate, I believe."‡ The effect upon the land of the fruitless struggle to pay exorbitant Rents it is not difficult to imagine. The Farmers clung desperately to the hope that at least at some future time the law designed for their protection would bring them succour. Meanwhile they redoubled their efforts to retain their holdings. Despite restrictive covenants, payment, with their dwindling capitals, could only be maintained by scourging the land. "If Rents are not reduced in proportion to the prices, Farmers will be apt to over-crop the land to enable them to discharge their engagements, until it will not pay even for a diminished quantity of labour, when it will be thrown out of cultivation in a deteriorated state."§ This had, in fact, been happening for some time past.

Retrogression of agriculture.

"The land throughout the Kingdom is going back in cultivation. I think that the Farmers on all the cold clay lands have been paying their Rents for these several years more from hard cropping and capital."‖

"The state of agriculture in Hampshire and West Sussex is within the last fifteen years decidedly worse."¶

"What is the state of cultivation in the counties of Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Bucks, Berks, and Herts, compared with what it was twenty years ago?"—"It is very much worse."**

* 1,755. Mr. W. Woodward, Farmer, of Worcester.
† 3,340. Mr. E. Coode, Land Agent, of St. Austell, Cornwall.
‡ 4,858-60. Mr. Peters, *supra*.
§ 2,853. Mr. Oliver, *supra*.
‖ 168. Mr. A. Murray, Land Agent.
¶ 9,804. Mr. C. Osborn, *supra*.
** 139,317. Mr. W. Downes, Land Agent.

"In 1792 the farms were in good condition, but they have been falling off ever since that time." *

"Since the passing of the last Corn Bill, which was in 1828, has the agriculture of these eighteen counties been going back since that?"—"I think the distress they feel has increased since the period of 1828."†

The evidence of this deterioration of agriculture was, of course, the diminution of produce, a diminution which still further aggravated the Farmers' difficulties. "In what particular has the state of agriculture in Northamptonshire gone back?"—"In its produce. The gross produce has, I think, diminished."‡

"The gross produce in South Wales has very much diminished, and the Tenants are very much reduced in circumstances." §

"I think the gross produce is decreasing, because, generally speaking, the whole lands in that neighbourhood (Somersetshire) have been neglected very much through the Farmers wanting capital." ‖

"The produce has diminished."¶

When the land would bear no longer, and the Tenant, overwhelmed with Rent and Rates, was at last sold up, the area of cultivation naturally contracted. "Do you know any large districts of land thrown out of cultivation within the last ten years, which have returned to grass or down?"—"I know a great deal of land which has got into that situation at different places."**

"I think that throwing a certain quantity of land out of cultivation is inevitable."††

"Has any portion of land gone entirely out of cultivation?"—"A good deal of the very poor land in Sussex." ‡‡

The Corn Law, in short, was, at least as far as some of the Landlords were concerned, no more of a benefit to

* 12,541. Mr. W. Smith, Farmer, of Swarlston Lows, near Derby.
† 11,669. Mr. E. Driver, Land Surveyor.
‡ 9,506. Mr. J. Cooper, Land Agent and Farmer, of Pottersbury, Northants.
§ 126. Mr. A. Murray, *suprà*.
‖ 4,738. Mr. Peters, *suprà*.
¶ 11,109. Mr. Harvey Wyatt, of Stafford, Land Agent.
** 275. Mr. A. Murray, *suprà*.
†† 3,253. Mr. T. Oliver, *suprà*.
‡‡ 7,243. Mr. R. Peyton, *suprà*.

the class which had been instrumental in passing it than it had proved to the Farmers themselves. It was no matter for astonishment, therefore, when Landlords were uncertain of receiving their Rents, and Farmers were crushed by insolvency, that the distress of the traders in the agricultural districts was also a source of trouble. The internal trade of the country was in a state of paralysis. Such is a picture of agriculture, drawn, not by the imagination of Mr. Cobden or Mr. Bright, but by the experiences of Protectionist Farmers before a Protectionist Committee, after five years' trial of a new and comparatively moderate duty upon corn which was to remedy the defects of the more restrictive measure of 1815.

Increase of Farmers' distress, 1833-36.

If the distress in agriculture was severe in 1833 the operation of the existing Corn Law of 1828 had not served to relieve it after a further trial of three years. On the contrary, despite the intention of Protection to secure remunerative prices, there had in fact been a steady decline in wheat since the year 1831. In the interval between 1833 and 1836 it is certain that, if we are to believe the evidence brought before Parliament, a number of once well-to-do Farmers must have been brought upon the Poor Rate, and their places taken by fresh Tenants with the same delusive expectations. It will be seen, from the statements of the witnesses before the Committees of 1836, that where the Tenantry had contrived to maintain their existence under the pressure of exaggerated Rents and amidst ever disappointed hopes, the struggle had become, year by year, one of increasing difficulty. The new Poor Law had alleviated the local burdens. Yet it appeared "from the concurrent testimony of many witnesses, examined before the Agricultural Committee, that in various parts of England the Farmer's capital is gradually sinking." * For example: "I do not think the condition of the Farmers generally in the county of Sussex is better than it was three or four years

1836. Progressive distress of Farmers. Another Parliamentary Inquiry.

* "Remarks on the Present State of Agriculture," by C. Shaw-Lefevre, Esq., M.P. (afterwards Lord Eversley), 1836. Mr. Lefevre was Chairman of the Commons' Committee, and his remarks embodied the Report which he had drawn up for that Committee, but to which the Committee failed to agree. Neither the Lords' nor the Commons' Committees reported.

ago; in fact, I think the Farmer's condition is deteriorated; his capital is less."*

1836. Acute distress of Farmers. Another Parliamentary Inquiry.

"Comparing the present time with twenty years ago, which is the best for the Farmer?"—"Twenty years ago, considerably."†

"Do you consider that the failures in the last three years have exceeded those in any former three years since you have resided there?"—"No doubt of it. I consider that the Farmer is 30 per cent. worse than in 1818."‡

"What is the state of the Farmer?"—"The condition of the Farmer I consider to be bordering on ruin; *he is not so well off as he was in* 1833."§

"Comparing the condition of the Farmers in your neighbourhood at present with their condition in 1833, should you say that they are much worse than they were then?"—"No doubt of it; they are *declining year after year;* and my belief is that there are a great number upon the precipice now that nothing can save."‖

General insolvency of the Farmers.

"Do you think the Tenants, generally speaking, are in a very deplorable state?"—"Generally speaking, they are."—"If they were hard pushed for arrears what would be the consequence?"—"I should say, *taking the Farmers as a body, they are an insolvent set*—there are many exceptions."¶

"Are the Farmers richer or poorer than they were in 1833?"—"I should say poorer."—"And do you not think that since that time there has been any reduction in the wages of labour or Rent or in the amount of tradesmen's bills adequate to the prices?"—"Certainly not."—"What would be their situation were the Landlord to distrain?"—"They might go to the Parish and work upon the roads."—"Are the Committee to understand that they would have nothing to fall back upon?"—"I suppose there are fifty around me that would have nothing if all arrears were paid up."**

* 13,123. Mr. Thomas Boniface, Farmer, near Littlehampton.
† 3,518. Mr. T. Bowyer, of Buckden, Hunts.
‡ 7,794,6. Mr. Handley, Corn Merchant, Spalding, Lincolnshire.
§ 5,619. Mr. Cooper, Farmer, of Blythburgh, Suffolk.
‖ 8,567. Mr. W. Umbers, Farmer, of Leamington, Warwickshire.
¶ 5,764. Mr. Cooper, *supra*.
** 1,840-1, 1,805-6. Mr. J. Cortis, Farmer, of Amersham, Bucks.

"Is there much distress among the Farmers in Glamorganshire?"—"Very much: *the capital of the Tenantry has been disappearing in the last ten, twelve, or fifteen years.* Many have become insolvent, and I could enumerate several others whose losses have been very great. I should say nearly £45,000 have been sunk by five-and-twenty Farmers within ten miles of me in the period I have stated."*

1836. Evidence of Farmers at the Parliamentary Inquiry.

"Taking the period since the last Committee sat in 1833, what do you consider the comparative state of the farming interest now and at that time?"—"Decidedly and progressively worse."†

"Farming is in a very depressed state now: in a much more depressed state than I recollect it to have been before."‡

"You have been asked a question with respect to the situation of the Tenants, and your answer was that many of them were almost beggared, and could not pay their Rents. Now supposing the Landlords as a body were to endeavour to compel the payment of Rents, what would be the situation of a great part of the Tenants of this country?"—"That they would have the land on their own hands."—"Do you think, then, that the Tenants of this country to a great extent hold their farms upon sufferance only, and at the mercy of the Landlords?"—"Yes, I do. One-half of the Tenantry in the district is insolvent."§

"*I consider the whole agricultural body insolvent.*"‖

"The Farmers are so badly distressed that I know perfectly well that, taking them as a body, they cannot exist from the profits of their farms, or perform their engagements to their Landlords and other creditors."¶

The Farmers distress, 1833-36.

The Farmers on arable farms are in a state of very great depression. The prices have been such that they cannot pay anything like the former Rents, or anything

* 4,273-4. Mr. E. David, Farmer, near Cardiff.
† 5,327. Mr. C. Koward, Farmer, York, E. Riding.
‡ 15,572. Mr. Spooner, Banker and Farmer.
§ 1,652-5. Mr. J. Rolfe, Farmer, of Beaconsfield, Bucks.
‖ Lords' Committee, 1,615, Mr. J. B. Bernard.
¶ Lords' Committee, 771, Mr. J. J. Allnatt, of Wallingford, Berks, Land Agent.

like the Rents they are now engaged probably to pay." * "*I believe Farmers have been losing for almost the last twenty years.*" †

"*When do you consider the distress to have begun?*"—"*In* 1815." ‡

"As a banker of Birmingham, can you give an opinion of the state of the Farmers round the country?"—"A vast number are insolvent. They are *all insolvent as it affects their farms*, unless they have private property." §

Notwithstanding this intolerable pressure upon the Farmer, now so long continued, wages had not declined in proportion to prices. Perhaps, on the whole, the situation of the agricultural labourer had been improved. This favourable change was not universal. "Should you say that the condition of the labourer is worse or better than it was in 1833?"—"I consider the condition of the labouring poor in our district (Suffolk) to be worse, generally speaking." ‖ It was natural that this should be so, since the Farmer had been for years supporting them out of his capital. The same evidence on this point is given as had been given before the Committee of 1833. "Taking the present wages of the labourers, do you think that they are paid out of the profits of the Farmer?"—"No."—"Do you think they are paid out of his capital?"—Certainly." ¶ The condition of the labourers, according to one witness, had long been "desperate," and the Farmer had, as before, the choice of gradual impoverishment or the sudden ruin of incendiarism. "If the labourer is now depending for his wages, not upon the profits of the Farmer, but upon his capital, do you think that is a state of things likely to continue?"—"No. It appears to me that it will not continue; it would not have continued in the state we now find it if it had not been for the riots of 1830, in our county. If it had not been for those riots, wages would

* Lords' Committee, 4,851, Mr. B. S. Escott.
† Lords' Committee, 1,555, Mr. R. Peyton, Land Agent, of London.
‡ Lords' Committee, 920, Mr. Leurin, Farmer, of Wickham Market, Suffolk.
§ Lords' Committee, 4,338-9, Mr. R. Spooner.
‖ 5,637. Mr. Cooper, *suprd.*
¶ 14,847-8. Mr. J. Freeland, Farmer, of Chichester.

have been lower at this time than they are. At that time there was a *considerable rise of wages*, and they have never reduced themselves in proportion to the fall in the price of wheat."—"The rise that took place was *from intimidation in consequence of the fires?*"—"Undoubtedly."—"And the fires were in consequence of a disposition on the part of the Tenantry to reduce the wages corresponding with the reduction in prices?"—"Yes." *

Desperate condition of the labourers. Wages extorted by intimidation.

"With respect to the labourers, *we are paying* 50 *per cent. more for labour than we ought to do, as a sort of premium of insurance to prevent our farms being burnt down.* In the village near me we had thirteen fires in one year and a half."—"To what do you attribute those?"—"To the desperate state of the labouring class." †

"You spoke of certain calamitous circumstances which you think have enhanced unnaturally the price of wages; what do you allude to?"—"I mean the prevalence of fires and the threatening attitude assumed by the labourers, in the Southern districts of England more particularly."—"Does it follow that if the present rate of agricultural prices continue, ultimately wages must descend to a lower level?"—"Undoubtedly."—"Will that be an easy process, or will it be accompanied whenever it takes place with further insubordination among the labourers?"—"With desperate and alarming excesses on the part of the labouring population." ‡

"Can you keep up this rate of wages at the present prices?"—"No."—"Then you must lower?"—"Yes, but the Farmers are fearful of lowering."—"What are they afraid of?"—"They are afraid that the labourers will set fire to their premises or annoy them in going about." §

"Have you had many fires in your neighbourhood lately?"—"We had one last Friday week; that is one great reason why we cannot reduce labour." "Should

* 13,172-4. Mr. T. Boniface, *suprà*.

† 2,351-4. Mr. W. Thurnall, Farmer, of Duxford, Cambs.

‡ 6,189-92. Mr. H. Burgess, Secretary to the Committee of Country Bankers.

§ Lords' Committee, 2,971-3. Mr. J. Carter, Farmer, of Hunstanton, Norfolk.

The Farmers' distress, 1833-36.

you otherwise have reduced your labour?"—"I should, certainly."—"*Can you go on paying the present wages?*"—"*No.*"—"*You would decrease them but for the fear of fires?*"—"*I think we should do so, certainly, from the necessity of the case.*"* The only alleviation of the Farmers' load was derived from the Poor Law Amendment Act, the working of which had in a very short time sensibly diminished pauperism, so that the Poor Rates no longer amounted, as they did in at least one parish in Sussex, to 20s. in the £.† On the other hand, cultivation was still deteriorating, as it was in 1833, and from the same causes. "Should you say that the cultivation of Buckinghamshire has fallen off within these last eight or ten years?"—"I should say so, in the neighbourhood in which I live."‡

Retrogression of agriculture.

"Is the state of agriculture within your district better or worse than it was when you became a Farmer?"—"Worse; when I first became a Farmer it was much better than it is now."§

"You stated that the Farmers in your neighbourhood were in a deplorable situation. Do you think that the cultivation of the land has gone back in your neighbourhood?"—"Certainly, in many instances; I do not say universally."‖ "Speaking generally (of Warwickshire) the land is deteriorating in cultivation."¶

"There is a greater quantity of land retrograding than improving."**

"It has been by persisting in the high Rents that the farms have been worked out of condition."††

"Have tenants in your part of the country what is called scourged the land, that is, by over-cropping or working it out?"—"In many instances they have, to a very great extent."—"Has not the ruin of the estate in that way been the means of keeping them up in the way

* Lords' Committee, 93-96. Mr. Waring, Farmer, of Chelsfield, Kent.

† 13,156-8. Mr. Boniface, *suprà*.

‡ 358. Mr. Brickwell, Farmer, of Leckhampstead, Bucks.

§ 3,685. Mr. H. Morson, Farmer, of Denham, Herts.

‖ 2,395. Mr. Thurnall, *suprà*.

¶ 8,454. Mr. W. Umbers, *suprà*.

** 5,189. Mr. J. Scott, Corn Merchant, of Liverpool.

†† 12,409. Mr. C. C. Parker, Farmer, of Woodham Mortimer, Essex.

they have kept up?"—"Yes."—"And so saved themselves from ruin?"—"They have done everything they could to prop up a bad concern for a year or two, and have sunk at last." * Even scourging did not save the Farmer's capital, which was ultimately the source from which the Rents were paid—Rents forced up by the illusory hopes held out by the Corn Laws. "What is the condition of the Farmers in your district?"—"There is a Landlord, who owns several parishes, and who has exacted extravagantly large Rents; he naturally makes his Tenants poor; he perhaps does not take more than 2s. or 3s. an acre more than it is worth, but even that will deter men of capital and experience from taking the land; he is always making distresses and in hot water with his Tenants." †

Rent paid out of capital.

"What did you find to be the condition of the Farmers in 1832 from all the returns made to you?"—"That at that time no less than half the average Rent of the Kingdom was paid out of capital instead of out of profits." ‡

"Do you think Farmers have any means of paying Rent out of the profits made on their lands?"—"No, nor have they had for some time." §

"Do you think the Farmers have been paying the expenses of their farms out of capital, and not out of the produce of the farm?"—"Yes, I should say so, in almost all cases."—"Are they getting worse each year?"—"Yes." ‖

"How are Rents paid in the North?"—"In my opinion they are much better paid than they ought to be; because a great deal of Rent must come out of the Tenant's capital; and besides, I understand from tradesmen of agricultural towns that Farmers leave their bills unpaid in order to scrape together the Rent." ¶

* Lords' Committee, 1,822-4. Mr. H. Wilson, Farmer, of Allexton, Leicestershire.

† 12,813. Mr. Crowther, Farmer, of Evesham.

‡ Lords' Committee, 1,573. Mr. J. B. Bernard, of Sidmouth, Statistician.

§ Lords' Committee, 2,435. Mr. Bradley, Land Agent, of Glamorganshire.

‖ Lords' Committee, 800-1. Mr. J. Allnatt, of Wallingford, Berks.

¶ Lords' Committee, 3,573. Mr. Cayley, M.P. for Yorks, N. Riding.

1836. "The Farmers have been paying their Rents out of their capital. The capital of most is reduced, and of some entirely gone."—"Is the number of those whose capital is entirely gone considerable?"—"It is."*

"I believe the Farmers have been paying Rents out of the capital they employ. It has been my case."†

"Do you think the Tenants of your neighbourhood possess as much capital as they did in 1820?"—"No."—"They have been losing capital rather than gaining it?"—"Yes."‡

"Do you believe that many Farmers are now paying their Rent from their capital instead of their profits?"—"I am quite convinced that in many instances it has been paid out of capital, and where they had not capital it has been paid out of their stock on their farms. and where they had nothing to depend on but their produce the land has gone out of condition and the Rent is in arrear."§

"Taking the whole of the Farmers of Lothian, do you think they are possessed of as much capital as they were twenty years ago?"—"No; the Tenantry of the country have been very greatly changed since the conclusion of the war (1815); there was a complete change in their circumstances; *from being generally in comfortable circumstances the great majority of them were soon reduced to little better than a state of bankruptcy, with the high money Rents they had contracted.*"‖

The Farmers' distresses the result of Protection.

"Have the Farmers who hold their farms at money Rents suffered?"—"Yes; they suffer much at present, and they complain much."—"These money Rents were fixed under the operation of the old Corn Law (1815)?"—"Yes; under the expectation that the prices upon wheat would be maintained at something like what the Corn Law proposed."¶

Protection enhanced Rents.

"You were making a good deal of money from 1801-

* Lords' Committee, 4,211-2. Mr. Comfort, Solicitor, of Rochford, Essex.

† 3,236. Mr. R. Babbs, of Bradville, Essex.

‡ 11,683-4. Mr. R. H. Stares, Farmer, of Droxford, Hants.

§ 1,389. Mr. Rolfe, Farmer, of Beaconsfield, Bucks.

‖ 9,932. Mr. R. Hope, Farmer, of Fenton Barns, Haddingtonshire.

¶ 9,659. Mr. R. Hope, *supra*.

1814, were you not?"—"Not so much as the rise in the value of land indicated."—"If you had started farming in 1820 with £3,000 capital, how much more than £3,000 would you have had at present, do you think?" —*I believe that every one that started farming in* 1820 *with* £3,000 *capital at money Rent, as it was generally paid them, is hardly solvent at the present day.*"* As in 1833 and previous years, then, the Farmers' difficulties were, at bottom, a question of Rent, of Rent unnaturally enhanced by the Corn Laws. As Mr. Hope put it, "I am sure, *if it had not been for the Corn Law, Farmers would not have given so high a Rent.* In 1814 I took a new lease for twenty-one years of the farm I at present occupy, and have agreed to pay £1,710 for it, under the expectation that prices would keep up to something near 80s. a quarter; but we soon found we were under a delusion about it."†—"Can you suggest anything that the Legislature can do?"—"Nothing."—"*And you think it is a question mainly of Rent between the Landlord and the Tenant?*"—"*Certainly it is.*"‡

"The consequence of the Rents being kept up too high has been that the land has been overcropped?"—"Yes; when I have conversed with the Farmers this appears to be the conclusion they have come to, that *they have paid their Landlords what they ought to have paid to the Labourers;* if they had paid it to the Labourers they would have had value for their money, whereas they paid it to the Landlord, and, of course, received nothing back, and they have so much less to lay out upon their farms."§

"You think that the Rents are too high for present prices?"—"Certainly."‖

"The Corn Law induced men to offer more than has been well realised by the price of corn, because *it was generally expected from the Corn Laws that prices would be kept up to something like what they promised;* that the import of foreign corn would be restricted, and by that

* 9,783-7. Mr. R. Hope, *suprà.*
† 9,772. Mr. R. Hope, *suprà.*
‡ 13,506-7. Mr. J. Church, of Dumfries.
§ 12,664. Mr. J. Fison, Corn Merchant, of Thetford, Norfolk.
‖ 11,380. Mr. J. Hancock, Dorsetshire.

1836-42. means keep up the price of the home growth to 70s. or so."—"Is it the operation of the law, or some other cause, that has made the price of wheat so low, in your opinion?"—"I think the law has had nothing to do in bringing down the price of wheat. I think it is the favourable seasons and the abundant crops."—"Then *how has the Corn Law disappointed your expectations?*"

Why Protection enhanced Rents.

—"*Because it led those that took farms at money Rents to give a much higher Rent than they would have done.*"*

"I am the only remaining Farmer in the parish where I was brought up; except myself, there is not a Farmer, nor the son of a Farmer, remaining within the parish."—"What is the reason of their all having gone away?"—"The money Rents that were exacted of them; *they all conceived that they were to have* 80s. *a quarter*, and their calculations were made upon that. It soon appeared that that could not be realised, and they were not converted, and *ruin has been the consequence.*"†

Notwithstanding the distress which, as has been seen, had been prolonged ever since the Corn Law of 1815, persons inclined to agricultural pursuits continued to embark their capital in agriculture. They were "not converted," save by ruin, for the Corn Laws, like an *ignis fatuus*, still held out to them the hope, at least in years of scarcity, of excessive profits. Competition was thus stimulated for the holdings which had, after years of struggle, drained the outgoing Tenant of his capital. "The present duty gives the Farmers an expectation that something is to come to their relief that can never arrive, and on that account it holds up the value of land fictitiously."‡ "It is an extraordinary fact that even during these low prices the competition for farms has continued. The Farmers cannot turn themselves to other occupations."§ "Landlords do not like to let leases at the present prices: they do not think that wheat can remain in its present very low state."‖ "*The competition*

* 9,738-41. Mr. R. Hope, *suprà*.
† 10,113-4. Mr. A. Howden, Farmer, of East Lothian.
‡ 10,945. Mr. J. Ellis, Farmer, of Leicester.
§ 8,158. Mr. G. Calthrop, Corn Merchant, of Spalding, Lincolnshire.
‖ 11,408. Mr. J. Hancock, *suprà*.

for farms has kept up the Rents?"—"*Yes.*"* † Thus was generation after generation of Farmers sacrificed—not simply through their own imprudence, but through the illusions spread by a law which, while it was potent to injure, could not but be powerless to protect them.

It was the necessary consequence of these disasters to the Farmer that those who were dependent upon his custom were no less involved in difficulty. It has been seen that the Landlord's Rent first enforced its claim upon him. Little, indeed, then remained for the tradesman. "In what state generally are the tradesmen in the towns surrounded by agricultural districts?" "Many of them have been bankrupt, and the complaints of those who remain have been loud for some years that the Farmers, their best customers, are gone."‡ "The tradesmen are in a most deplorable state. I can speak to that most positively."§ The same distress existed in this class throughout the country, and in its turn reacted seriously upon the Farmers, whose customers these tradesmen were, by lowering the demand, and therefore the price of meat and dairy produce.

Neither the Committee of the Lords nor of the Commons could agree upon a Report. The supporters of the Corn Laws were unable to controvert the evidence of the injury inflicted on the Farmer, and the advocates of repeal as yet very inferior in numbers and influence. Matters went on unchanged.‖ Between 1838 and 1841

* Lords' Committee, 5,100, Mr. Blamire, M.P. for East Cumberland.

† A parallel effect is produced in countries of peasant proprietorship through the enhanced value which Protection to agriculture imparts to land. *The Moniteur des Intérêts Matériels* in a recent number says:—"The mortgages upon peasant owners in most parts of Europe are excessive. The *dette hypothécaire* of Prussia has increased these twenty-six years from 65 to 85 per cent. of the value of the land. In Brandenburg it exceeds its value by 50 per cent. In Austria the mortgages were, in 1858, £112,000,000; they are now over £500,000,000; those of France in 1876, £840,000,000. Half of the real estate of that country, and two-thirds of that of Belgium, really belong to the mortgagees, and Russia is not a whit behind the others." (From a letter in the *Mark Lane Express*, Nov. 8, 1886.)

‡ Lords' Committee, 3,387, Mr. Cayley, M.P., *suprà*.

§ 2,373. Mr. Thurnall, *suprà*.

‖ It is a significant fact, and one which in itself creates a strong *à priori* presumption against Protection to agriculture, that inquiry followed inquiry into agricultural distress during the thirty years of

trade was normally prosperous. Exports fluctuated between fifty millions in the former year and fifty-one and a half millions in 1841; the prodigious expansion of commercial wealth which followed upon the establishment of Free Trade being in those days unknown. In 1838 wheat began to show an upward tendency, which was continued in 1839, the average for which year was 70s. 8d. Rents immediately rose again and continued to do so for two years. The Farmers, whom the continued distress of twenty-five years had taught to refuse leases at the Rents asked, were called upon to pay an additional 10 to 30 per cent. for their holdings.* There was nothing to justify this. A far higher advance in the price of wheat would not have recouped their losses; and meat had for years remained at about the same level. But there was the specious hope of a scarcity and of a fortune to be realised in a single season which the Corn Law dangled before their eyes, and not the less before those of the Land Agent.

Rents may, through extortion on the one side and imprudence on the other, be pushed up to an excessive height, even when calculated upon the steady rise of produce in consequence of a natural expansion of demand. This has been the cause of heightened Rentals during the Free Trade period, and, subject to some qualifications, the Tenant must, in such case, be left to the guardianship of his own interests; but when Rents are built upon the airy basis of a law which promises what it cannot perform, the State is responsible as having departed from its position of neutrality, and excited fallacious hopes which serve but to put the Farmer and his fortunes at the mercy of the owners of the soil.

1842. General distress.

No sooner, then, were the Rents readjusted to the Landlords' advantage than prices began to decline afresh, and in 1843 wheat had fallen to 50s. 1d. Beasts were 34 per cent. and mutton 25 per cent. lower than in

Protection. Since the application of Free Trade to agriculture, on the other hand, but two, those of 1881 and 1893, chiefly in consequence of a cycle of seasons unprecedentedly adverse, have been thought necessary.

* See letter in *Morning Chronicle*, June 22, 1840. See Appendix B. There was no uniform system of official statistics by which the general rise of Rent between the last century and the abolition of the Corn Laws could be accurately measured.

1836, the year of inquiry into the distress, and the year 1844 witnessed a still further decline. The condition of the Farmers' customers, the manufacturing population, was appalling. In the days of Protection to manufactures progress was so slow that the export trade in the year of depression, 1842, was smaller than in 1835, one of the prosperous years of the preceding decade, and even than that of the years 1809, 1810, and 1815. But population was not stationary; in the best times it pressed hard upon the means of subsistence; the savings of workmen were infinitesimal as compared to those at the present day, and a paralysis of trade brought instant starvation. In 1842 "there seemed to be no class that was not threatened with ruin." The Speech from the Throne in February recommended to the consideration of Parliament "the state of the laws which affect the importation of corn and other articles, the produce of foreign countries." It also mentioned "with deep regret the continued distress in the manufacturing districts of the country." There was a growing deficiency in the revenue. The difference between the annual income and expenditure had increased from a deficiency of £1,593,000 in 1840 to no less than £3,977,000 in 1842. But details of public insolvency are less affecting than those which depict the abysses of personal distress. In Carlisle the Committee of Inquiry reported that a fourth of the population was in a state of starvation—actually certain to die of famine unless relieved by extraordinary exertions. In the woollen districts of Wiltshire the allowance to the independent labourer was not two-thirds of the minimum in the workhouse; and the large existing population consumed only a fourth of the meat and bread required by the much smaller population of 1820. In Stockport more than half the master spinners had failed before the close of 1842; dwelling-houses to the number of 3,000 were shut up, and the occupiers of many hundreds more were unable to pay Rates at all. "Five thousand persons were walking the streets in compulsory idleness; and the Burnley Guardians wrote to the Secretary of State that the distress was far beyond their management . . . Provision dealers were subject to incursions from a wolfish man prowling for food for his

1842. What Protection does for the artisan.

children, or from a half-frantic woman with a dying baby at her breast, or from parties of ten or a dozen desperate wretches, who were levying contributions along the street. The linendraper told how new clothes had become out of the question among his customers, and they bought only remnants and patches to mend the old ones. The baker was more and more surprised at the number of people who bought halfpennyworths of bread. A provision-dealer used to throw away outside scraps of bacon, but now respectable customers of twenty years' standing bought them in pennyworths, to moisten their potatoes. These shopkeepers contemplated nothing but ruin from the impoverished condition of their customers. While Rates were increasing beyond all precedent, their trade was only one-half, or one-third, or even one-tenth, what it had been three years before. . . . At Leeds the pauper stone-heap amounted to 150,000 tons; and the Guardians offered the paupers 6s. per week for doing nothing, rather than 7s. 6d. a week for stone-breaking. The millwrights and other trades were offering a premium upon emigration, to induce their hands to go away. At Hinckley one-third of the inhabitants were paupers; more than a fifth of the houses stood empty; and there was not work enough in the place to employ properly one-third of the weavers. In Dorsetshire, a man and his wife had for wages 2s. 6d. per week and three loaves, and the ablest labourers had 6s. or 7s."* "In the summer of 1839," writes the well known Mr. Baptist Noel,† "several poor persons with whom I conversed in Devonshire assured me that the whole of a poor man's wages, at that time, would scarcely produce dry bread for a family of four or five children. In various agricultural counties, if I am rightly informed, the labourers and their children can scarcely ever touch meat." Protection, therefore, while it had secured for the Farmer a monopoly of produce, had left his customers without the means to purchase it.

and for the labourer.

Since sufficient testimony has been accumulated from the reluctant admissions of Protectionist Farmers

* Martineau's "History of the Peace." Book VI., chap. v.

† "A Plea for the Poor." By the Hon. and Rev. B. W. Noel. 1841.

themselves as to the reality of their distress, and from an impartial historian as to the desperate circumstances of their customers, the case against Protection need not be rested upon the assertions of an acknowledged opponent like Mr. Cobden. But some instructive observations addressed by that gentleman to Farmers serve to impress the manner in which the welfare of the Farmer is linked with that of the consumer: "I find that in Dundee, in Leeds, in Kendal, in Carlisle, in Birmingham, and in Manchester, the falling-off in the consumption of butcher's meat has been one-third as compared with what it was five years ago. How is it possible that this great falling-off in the consumption should take place without causing a diminution in the price of the article? We who are apt to cultivate our connections, to nurse our customers, to wish them well, and to be anxious for their prosperity, should take a very different view of the thing. If we find that our customers are declining, and that they have no longer the means to purchase, we know that we, as sellers, must suffer in consequence." In addressing the Farmers of Hereford, in 1843, Mr. Cobden said: "A reverend friend of mine in Stockport took some pains to ascertain what the falling-off in the consumption of cattle was between 1835 and 1842; and in the former year, in the three months of July, August, and September, there were sold 814 head of cattle in the borough of Stockport; whilst in the corresponding three months of 1842 only 194 head were sold, being about one-third of the quantity which was consumed in the same period of 1835. Now, there was this falling-off to the amount of 600 head of cattle in three months at Stockport; the same melancholy fact was also observable in Manchester and other manufacturing towns. If all this diminution was going on in the consumption, it does not require much philosophy to see that it would not be long before you would be compelled to take a less price for your cattle; for as your customers diminish in number you will get a less price for what you have to divide among them." This was the secondary, but very effectual manner in which the Protectionist system devoured the Farmer's fortunes. It was not merely that it raised his Rent and Rates; it hampered him in the discharge of those outgoings by

1842. The distress of the artisan brings distress to the Farmer.

1842-44. Condition of the Farmers' customers.

impairing the means of his customers, and thereby compelling him to sell his meat at any price he could get for it. "I will ask the Farmers," said Mr. Cobden, in March, 1843, "another question, and that is a home-thrust; it is a question about which, as the son of a Farmer myself, I may be presumed to possess some knowledge. I ask them, have you, as a class, since the year 1815, done as well, made as much money, and realised as much profit on a given amount of capital, as the retail trades—the grocer, the linen-draper, the tailor, in the nearest market-town? Why, when such a question is put, the Farmer throws up his eyes in anger that he should be called upon to solve such a question. 'Why, make as much?' he says. 'No; we never did; if we can live and send our children to school, and make both ends meet, that is all we expect,' and as to settlements with their Landlords, and payments of money, why, the generality of them have endless accounts with Mr. Redtape, the steward, and indeed they are never settled. The arrears, it is true, are sometimes paid up in dear years, and then they run on again until another period of high prices enables them once again to clear them off. The Farmer of this country is on precisely the same footing with regard to the Landlords as the Fellah population of Egypt is with Mehemet Ali. I went once, when in Egypt, into the fields with my gun, and I asked a Farmer how he settled his accounts with the Pasha. 'Do you have any settlements?" I asked; 'how are the accounts arranged?' 'Oh, sir,' said he, 'the accounts are as long as your gun! We have no settlement of accounts; he takes all the produce and leaves us just enough to live upon.' And so it is with the Farmers."

Practical examples of the benefits derived by Farmers from Protection.

A correspondent of the *Scotsman* in 1844 gives the following practical examples of the operation of Protection upon Tenants: Whatever advantage the Landlords may derive from the Corn Laws, it may be truly said that the Tenants have got no benefit from them, as I shall proceed to show from an examination of the result of farming on the estates of two large Landowners in this county, the rental of which may be from £8,000 to £10,000 per annum. The first estate to which I shall allude is

Gilmerton, belonging to Sir David Kinloch, and consisting of six farms, besides one home farm, with grass parks, &c. Within the last thirty or thirty-five years three Tenants have left this property without being ruined (names given); ruined and left their farms seven Tenants within thirty-five years (names of farms given). The other estate belongs to Mr. Hope, of Luffness, now Under-Secretary for the Colonies, and consists of five farms, with grass parks, &c. There have left this property, during the same time, without being ruined, two Tenants (names given). Leases were renewed to three old Tenants (names given). Ruined and left their farms during the same period five Tenants (names of farms given). Now, of the five Tenants on both estates who have left their farms without being ruined, it is well known that four of them succeeded to large sums of money by the death of relations, which rendered them quite independent of their farms (names given); and hence *only one Tenant of those depending entirely on farming has left these estates for upwards of thirty years without being ruined.* Such has been the working of the Corn Laws."

1836-44. Practical examples of the benefits derived by agriculturists from Protection.

The report of a *Times* Commissioner on the condition of the Welsh Farmers and labourers, which appeared in the *Times* of December 2, 1843, amply confirms this description of the Farmers' situation. "The small Farmer here breakfasts on oatmeal and water boiled, called 'duffery' or 'flummery,' or on a few mashed potatoes left from the previous night's supper. He dines on potatoes and buttermilk, with sometimes a little white Welsh cheese and barley-bread, and, as an occasional treat, has a salt herring. Fresh meat is never seen on the Farmer's table. He sups on mashed potatoes. His butter he never tastes; he sells it to pay his Rent. The pigs he feeds are sold to pay his Rent. As for beef or mutton, they are quite out of the question—they never form the Farmer's food. Is not this a 'muzzling of the ox which treadeth out the corn?' The condition of the labourer, from inability in the Farmer to give him constant employment, is deplorable. They live entirely on potatoes, and have seldom enough of them, having only one meal a day. Being half-starved they are constantly upon the Parish. They live in mud cottages, with only

1842. Condition of Farmers and Labourers.

one room for sleeping, cooking, and living—different ages and sexes herding together. Their cottages have no windows, but a hole through the mud wall to admit the air and light, into which a bundle of rags or turf is thrust at night to stop it up. The thinly-thatched roofs are seldom drop-dry, and the mud floor becomes consequently damp and wet and dirty almost as soon as the road; and to complete the wretched picture, huddled in a corner are the rags and straw of which their beds are composed."

There is no more authoritative and comprehensive summary of the condition to which Protection to agriculture and Protection to manufactures had reduced Farmers and Traders alike than a resolution passed almost unanimously by the Common Council of the City of London on December 8, 1842, "Resolved: That the continuous and increasing depression of the manufacturing, commercial, and agricultural interests of this country, and the widespread distress of the working classes are most alarming:—Manufacturers without a market, and shipping without freight;* capital without investment, trade without profit, and Farmers struggling under a system of high Rents, with prices falling as the

* Compare with this record of the consequences actually arising from restrictions upon importation the prediction of Adam Smith as to the effect of free trade in corn. "If importation was at all times free, our farmers and country gentlemen would probably, one year with another, get less money for their corn than they do at present, when importation is at most times in effect prohibited; but the money which they got would be of more value, would buy more goods of all other kinds, and would employ more labour. Their real wealth, their real revenue, therefore, would be the same as at present, though it might be expressed by a smaller quantity of silver; and they would neither be disabled nor discouraged from cultivating corn as much as they do at present. On the contrary, as the rise in the real value of silver, in consequence of lowering the money price of corn, lowers somewhat the money price of all other commodities, it gives the industry of the country where it takes place some advantage in all foreign markets, and thereby tends to encourage and increase that industry" "Wealth of Nations," bk. iv., ch. v.: Digression concerning the Corn Trade and Corn Laws. The only part of this prediction which has not been proved true is the assumption that the amount of corn cultivation would remain constant; but this is based upon the further implied assumption that the capacity of the corn-exporting countries would also remain proportional to the existing production at home. The economical discovery of America has, to a great extent, invalidated what was in Adam Smith's time a probable conjecture.

means of consumption by the people fail; a working population rapidly increasing, and a daily decreasing demand for its labour; union houses overflowing as workshops are deserted; Corn Laws to restrain importation and inducing a starving people to regard the laws of their country with a deep sense of their injustice. These facts call for the immediate application of adequate remedies. That this Court anxiously appeals to the First Minister of the Crown to give practical effect to his declarations in favour of Free Trade, by bringing forward at the earliest possible period in the ensuing Session of Parliament such measures for securing the unrestricted supply of goods and the employment of the people as may effectually remove a condition of depression and distress too widely prevailing, and too rapidly increasing, to consist with the safety of the community and the preservation of our social and political institutions."

The sliding scale of 1842.

In conformity with the expressions of the Speech from the Throne Sir R. Peel, in the Session of 1842, introduced the last of the Corn Laws. The urgency of the distress necessitated a repudiation on the part of the Government of the delusive promises with which the Farmers had been flattered by the measure of 1829. Sir Robert Peel's Bill adhered to the sliding scale in preference to a fixed duty such as had been proposed by Lord John Russell in May, 1841. It proposed to afford relief to the consumer and to decrease the Protection granted to the home grower. But though it materially abated duties which were ostensibly prohibitory, it yet retained a substantial monopoly. When wheat was at 50s., for instance, the existing duty of 36s. 8d. was relaxed to 20s., a change which, it is obvious, would carry no practical consequences. Even at 70s. there was a duty of 5s., though this was less than half the duty up to that time leviable.

Little as such a measure relieved the consumer, it could effect still less for the Farmer. It was intended to keep wheat steady at about 56s., but in 1843 wheat had declined to 50s. 1d., a fall in five years of 29 per cent., and in two years of 22 per cent. Yet rents were still fixed at starvation prices. The abundant harvest

stimulated trade, and supplied the wants of the famished population, but only served to add to the inextricable embarrassments of the Farmers.

1842. Wheat practically protected as before.

In 1844 wheat was still low, and the Farmers consequently yet less able to struggle under their burdens than in the year preceding. With the fortunes of the Farmers sank the lot of their labourers. Wages were cut down again to 5s., 6s., or 7s. a week, and destitution wrung the country districts. In the county of Suffolk, for the quarter ending Lady Day, 1843, out of a population of 314,722 persons there were 39,489 receiving parish relief, being 13 per cent., or more than one in eight in the whole population. In the county of Essex, out of a population of 320,818 there were 44,694 receiving relief, or 14 per cent., or about one in seven of the whole population. In the county of Norfolk, out of a population of 343,277 there were 37,666 receiving relief, or 11 per cent., or about one in nine of the whole inhabitants of the county.

With the increase in the Rentals the reward of the labourer had declined till, measured in food, it was below the standard of the previous century.* The agricultural poor were sinking to sustenance upon potatoes, that sure criterion of a country's misery. Mr. King, a surgeon of Calne, Wilts, wrote: "If women and boys who labour in the fields suffer in health at all, it is not from the work they perform, but from the want of food"; and the wife of a farm labourer described the general condition of her class in saying, "We never know what it is to get enough to eat . . . of bread there is never enough. The children are always asking for more at every meal." Even if matters stopped short of starvation, the Farmers, who, from feelings of humanity and to lighten the Poor Rates, were obliged to find employment for two pairs of hands enfeebled by famine to do the work of one, could not but be sensible of an aggravation of their burdens. But there was worse behind. The labourers, ignorant of the

* At the rate per acre for reaping wheat "the peasant in (Arthur) Young's time got a little more than one-tenth of the price of a quarter of wheat for his labour, and the fourteenth century peasant about two-thirds of the value of the whole produce." "Six Centuries of Work and Wages," by J. Thorold Rogers, vol. i., p. 234. See, further, vol. ii,, p. 427.

real causes of their misery, vented that irritation with which hunger goads the brain in acts of savage fury upon their employers' property. Incendiarism once more played the part in rural economy which it had filled in 1833 and 1836. The one class in the country for which the most effective Protection was maintained was the class whose fortunes were most signally and most continuously unprosperous.

1845. Motion for another Parliamentary inquiry into agricultural distress.

In 1845 wheat fell again to 50s. 10d. Mr. Cobden, on the 13th of March, moved for a Select Committee "to inquire into the causes and extent of the alleged existing agricultural distress, and into the effect of legislative Protection upon the interests of Landowners, Tenants, and Farm Labourers." This was refused by the Conservative majority. Lord John Russell attacked Protection on the 26th of May with the direct resolution "That the present Corn Law tends to check improvements in agriculture, produces uncertainty in all farming speculations, and holds out to the owners and occupiers of land prospects of special advantage which it fails to secure." This resolution was negatived, not by argument, but by votes, for it was based upon the patent and unquestionable fact that now, when the Farmers "had a Protection of 40 per cent., they were still in a state of difficulty and distress."

Many of the Farmers had by this time learnt, through bitter experience, that the Corn Laws, if they were a Protection to the Landlords, meant to themselves ruin. In April, 1845, the *Brighton Herald* states, "in illustration of the state of the farming interest in this neighbourhood at the present time, that there is almost an uninterrupted series of farms reaching from Washington to Worthing—a distance of eight miles—now to be let or about to be let." As Mr. Hope, of Fenton Barns, at this time pithily put it:—"Corn Law Rents, at Free Trade prices, are at the bottom of the Farmers' distress." Sir Robert Peel's conversion but put the seal upon the change now matured in public opinion, and the failure of the potato crop in Ireland, which necessitated an instant relaxation of restrictive duties, furnished occasion for the measure of 1846, by which the duties on imported cattle were removed, and after three years' nominal duty corn was to

1846. Repeal of the Corn Laws.

be admitted entirely free.* So far as the Farmers were concerned, the untaxed admission of butter and cheese in 1860 completed the adoption of Free Trade. It is a significant commentary upon the operation of the Corn Law that the immediate effect of its abolition was a fall in Rents, and even eleven years afterwards, in 1857, though the population and wealth of the country had in the interim made giant strides, the gross annual value of lands was returned at a decrease of £50,000.

In the light of nearly half a century's experience the effect of an import duty upon corn for the "protection of agriculture" can now be estimated. And first as regards the Farmers. During the fourteen years that the Corn Law of 1815 was in practical operation (1815 to 1829) wheat averaged 66s. 8d. a quarter. Rent was fixed on the basis of wheat at 80s. a quarter. Therefore the competition fostered by the Corn Law kept Rent at 20 per cent. above its natural limit. During the twelve years that the Corn Law of 1829 was in operation (1829 to 1841) wheat averaged 58s. 4d. a quarter. Rent was fixed on the basis of wheat at 64s. a quarter. Therefore the competition fostered by the Corn Law kept Rent at 10 per cent. above its natural limit. It is, accordingly, a probable inference that the imposition of a 5s. duty on wheat would raise Rent by an amount which could only be compensated by an increased selling price of more than 5s. 6d., a loss of 10 per cent. on his wheat to the Farmer.†

What a Five Shilling duty on Corn would do for the Farmer.

Upon this basis a pertinent illustration may be founded. The total area of Great Britain may be roughly put at 56,800,000 acres, the wheat area being rather more than 2,300,000. The wheat area, therefore, now forms less than one-twenty-fifth of the whole. But as the object of a protective measure, whether it take the form of duty or bounty, is the extension of wheat-growing, we may anticipate that, if the proposed Act is effective, the proportion of wheat acreage to the whole will revert to the

Who gains by Protection?

* It is noteworthy that the second reading of the Bill for the Repeal of the Corn Laws was moved in the House of Lords by the Earl of Ripon, who had himself been the introducer of the Corn Law Bill of 1815 into the House of Commons.

† Cp. Appendix D.

proportion under the milder Corn Laws. There do not appear to be in existence any returns of the acreage under wheat during the last decade of Protection; but in Porter's "Progress of the Nation" (ed. 1847) is to be found an estimate of the average number of persons fed upon home-grown wheat in Great Britain (taking the yearly consumption at 8 bushels per head) as 17,077,469, between 1841 and 1844. At 24 bushels to the acre, this represents an acreage of 5,692,489, or about one-tenth of the whole. To appreciate the effect of a reversion to Protection upon Landlords' fortunes, let us apply these figures to the case of a distinguished Protectionist family. The Lowthers hold some 74,000 acres, at an average of 39s. per acre. If it be assumed that on these estates the wheat acreage is in average proportion to the rest, there are now 2,960 acres of wheat land. In the event of a reversion to the former proportion the wheat area will be 7,400 acres, *i.e.*, two and a half times as much. Estimating the produce of this at three quarters an acre, the Lowther family will gain by a 5s. duty on corn £6,105 per annum upon their wheat acreage alone. Of this sum £5,550 would be represented by the 5s. drawn from the pockets of the consumer; £555 would represent the additional 6d. which, as has been shown, by the enhancement of Rent and the inspiration of fallacious hopes, would be wrung from the credulous Farmer.*

How a Five Shilling duty would amerce the Farmer.

Nor must the Farmer forget that the price of foreign corn and of the cakes used for stock-feeding is raised for him as well as for the non-agricultural consumer. If a Corn Law should raise the price of wheat in England 5s. a quarter, the rise per bushel is 7½d. Take the consumption of wheat in a Farmer's family as 1½ bushels a week. The proposed Corn Law will cost each such family 10d. a week. The annual excess of cost to the Farmer and every member of the community whose rate of consumption is the same, due to the Corn Law, will be 43s. 4d. But that expense to the Farmer, it may be

* In France, where protective duties have recently been increased in favour of agriculture, the same phenomena are now recurring. "Landed proprietors assert that their tenants have become very irregular in the payment of their rents, and that some do not pay at all without being forced by legal process to do so." Consular Reports, 1886, for consular district of Brest.

answered, is compensated by the enhanced price of his produce. No doubt, if his holding be a favourable soil for wheat. Yet, even in this case, there is another way in which a Corn Law bears directly against the Farmer. Taking the estimated ordinary average of three and a half quarters to the acre, 7,766,500 quarters of wheat are annually produced in Great Britain on the wheat acreage of 2,219,000.* If the produce be reckoned at nine times the seed, it follows that 862,933 quarters of wheat are annually sown. If a Corn Law add 5s. a quarter to the price of wheat and double the wheat acreage, the seed sown will be 1,725,866 quarters, and the excess of price of the quarters of seed thus sown will amount to £431,466. A considerable sum must be added for seed oats and barley; but if this addition be taken at only one-third, the total will be £575,288 per annum, constituting a charge which falls exclusively upon the corn growers. Thus the advantage which the Farmer derives from high prices does not extend to the whole produce. His gain lies in the difference between the quantity sown and the quantity produced. If after sowing three bushels he reaps twenty-seven bushels, his gain is the price of twenty-four bushels. Unproductive soils, therefore, such as yield but twenty-one bushels for three bushels of seed, are those most unfavourably affected by a Corn Law.

It has been said that the gain of the Farmer derived from protective duties on corn lies in the excess of the quantity produced over the quantity sown. But this assumes, for the sake of a general principle, that the Farmer sells the whole of his produce, which, in practice, is not the case. It is evident that in reality the Farmer derives no advantage from the artificial value given to his produce by Protection so far as that part of the produce is concerned which is consumed in the maintenance of the men and animals employed in cultivation. Now it is a characteristic of Protection that, like a slave-power,† it must be perpetually seeking an extension of its area, and certainly there is no good reason why, if its

* Agricultural Produce Statistics for Great Britain, 1891. The actual acreage for 1892 was 2,219,839. As this is likely to fall, I have taken the round figure of 2,219,000.

† See "The Slave Power: An Attempt to explain the Real Issues involved in the American Contest." By the late Professor Cairnes.

Agricultural Protection a system of mutual plunder and common loss.

enactment is advantageous, the advantages should be confined to corn. Thus on the 2nd May, 1887, the *Mark Lane Express*, a Protectionist paper, published a leading article demanding "Protection pure and simple." "Unless," it said, "we can get a duty on wheat and on meat and on all agricultural produce imported from abroad, there will be no relief to British agriculture." The general system of Protection which was in force before the abolition of the Corn Laws must, therefore, be applied to all kinds of produce, if the agricultural interest as a whole is to derive benefit. Why should Cheshire and Gloucestershire be taxed for the corn-growing counties? Accordingly bacon, hops, and butter must receive that "moderate" Protection to which they, in their turn, are justly entitled. But what will be the effect of this upon the Farmers? Precisely what it was in the days of the Corn Laws: through the various protective duties they will devour one another without enriching themselves. The farmers of light lands in Norfolk sold no protected produce of their own save wheat and barley. They fattened bullocks which they bought in the pasture districts, and the effect of the restrictions upon foreign cattle was that they were themselves compelled to pay a higher price for this, their raw material. The oats with which they fed their horses were bought of the oat growers of the Lincolnshire Fens, and for every bushel of these the protective duties exacted from them an extra payment. The cheese consumed by themselves and their labourers cost them an additional 10s. per cwt., the amount of the protective duty, and this was a fine exacted by Cheshire, Derbyshire, Gloucestershire, Wilts, and Somersetshire. The Southern counties were enabled to tax them an additional 10s. per cwt. for clover seed and between £3 and £4 a cwt. for their consumption of hops. The average rate of duty per quarter actually paid during the continuance of the Corn Law of 1828 (1829-41) was, for wheat, 5s. 7d.; for barley, 4s. 8d.; oats, 6s. 6d.; peas, 5s. 10d.; beans, 6s. 11d. Accepting these as the effective protecting duties, the following would be the amount paid, under the sliding scale of 1842, by the cultivator of 400 acres of light land in East Norfolk, in the shape of

1842. How Farmers were plundered by Protection.

protecting duties on agricultural produce consumed by himself, his labourers and cattle.*

Seed Corn.	Bushels.	Acres.	Qrs. Protective Duty.	£	s.	d.
Wheat	2½	× 100 =	31¼ at 5s. 6d.	8	11	10
Barley	3½	× 100 =	43¾ at 4s. 8d.	10	4	2
Clover, red (12 lbs.)		× 100 =	1200 lbs.			
Do. White (8 lbs.)		× 100 =	800 lbs.			
			= 2000 lbs. say 17⅞ cwt. at 10s.	8	17	6
Trefoil (8 lbs.)		× 100 =	800 lbs. say 7¼ cwt. at 5s.	1	15	9
Rye Grass (½ bushel)		× 100 =	50 bus. 12½ cwt. at 10s.	6	5	0
				35	14	3
Horse keep (12 horses, 1 riding horse, at 91 qrs. of oats weekly), at 6s. 6d. a qr.				29	11	6
Oilcake for sheep and cattle				80	0	0
Tradesmen's bills (10 per cent. on £100)				10	0	0
Sundries (agricultural dinners, &c.)				2	0	0
Labourers' food (flour, cheese, and bacon, five labourers per 100 acres)				47	13	4
Labourers' beer (malt and hop duties)				4	13	2
Total increased cost of cultivation arising from protective duties				209	12	3
Deduct enhanced value of produce sold :—						
Wheat 4 qrs. × 100 acres = 400 qrs. at 5s. 6d....				110	0	0
Barley 5 qrs. × 100 acres = 500 qrs. at 4s. 8d....				116	13	4
				226	13	4
Difference, being the Farmer's gain from Protection ...				17	1	1

But this gain of £17 1s. 1d. is only apparent, for it leaves out the question of Rent, on which the influence of Protection has already been seen, and the enhancement of the household expenses of the Farmer's family. Let it be assumed that under the sliding scale Rent was calculated on the moderate expectation only of 56s. a quarter. The price realised in fact averaged 50s. a quarter : therefore if the Rent of the 400 acres be taken at £500 the Farmer would be paying too high a Rent by £54. If his household expenditure be taken at £400 a year, at least 10 per cent. (£40) may be

* See "An Attempt to estimate the Effects of Protecting Duties on the Profits of Agriculture." By John Morton and Joshua Trimmer, London, 1854.

assigned to the enhancement of prices under Protection. The sum then stands as follows :—

	£	s.	d.
Total increased cost of cultivation arising from protective duties (suprà)	209	12	3
Increased Rents arising from protective duties ...	54	0	0
Increased housekeeping and general expenses arising from protective duties	40	0	0
Total increased cost to Farmer arising out of Protection to Agriculture	303	12	3
Deduct enhanced value of produce sold (suprà)	226	13	4
TOTAL LOSS TO FARMER ON 400 ACRES THROUGH A "MODERATE" PROTECTION TO AGRICULTURE...	76	18	11

Nor, indeed, was this his whole loss. The being precluded from purchasing low-priced corn instead of artificial manures, and therefore from fattening more stock than his farm could carry under the protective system, might be calculated as entailing upon him an additional loss of £200. But, be the loss small or great, under no circumstances could the protective duties on agricultural produce be remunerative in the example taken. What is true of Norfolk would be equally true of similar soils in Sussex, Surrey, Berks, Wilts, Hants, and Dorsetshire. It will be sufficient to supplement this estimate, substantiated as to its conclusions by the evidence already accumulated, with an account of actual experience.

The following is the recapitulation of a detailed account published by Mr. C. H. Lattimore, Farmer, of Wheathamstead, Herts, in the *Mark Lane Express*, December 1845 :—

"Account of Corn crops grown upon and sold off Wheathamsteadplace Farm in 1844, consisting of 250 acres arable and 21 of grass land. Total, 271 acres.

RECAPITULATION.

Taking the mean estimate of the consumption of the Norfolk labourer which gives the extra cost of Protection upon his food at £2 7s. 8d. per annum, it will amount to :—

	£	s.	d.
For 18 labourers, not boarded, at £2 7s. 8d.	42	18	0
Allow 2 labourers extra for harvest work, at £2 7s. 8d.	4	15	4
Ditto 10 per cent. on tradesmen's bills (£65)	6	10	0
Ditto 10 per cent. on household expenses (say £300)	30	0	0
Ditto for Rents, Rates, and Tithes increased by Protection, say	20	0	0
Cost of Protection duties on cattle food (details given)	204	17	3
Total cost of protective duties	309	0	7
Deduct enhanced value of produce... ...	96	16	2½
TOTAL LOSS TO FARMER ON 271 ACRES THROUGH A "MODERATE" PROTECTION TO AGRICULTURE	212	4	4½

Thus it appears that the loss upon 271 acres of land in one year from Protection amounted to the sum of £212 4s. 4½d., or 15s. 8d. per acre. I anticipate that it will be said to show an unusual consumption of cattle food upon 271 acres of land; still it is a correct statement of facts, and upon the system of stock-feeding pursued upon this farm the purchases for stock and cattle food, taking an average of years, have considerably exceeded the amount realised from the sales of corn produced from the farm."

The teaching of such figures as these was lucidly summed up by Mr. Cobden in the debate of the 13th of March, 1845, upon the effects of Corn Laws upon agriculturists. "I contend," he said, "that *by this protective system the Farmers throughout the country are more injured than any other class* in the community. I would take, for instance, the article of clover seed. . . . I believe clover seed is to be excluded from the schedule of free importation. Now, I ask, for whose benefit is this exception made? I ask the hon. gentleman the Member for North Northamptonshire whether those whom he represents, the Farmers of that district of the country, are, in a large majority of instances, sellers of clover seed? I will undertake to say they are not. How many counties in England are there which are benefited by the Protection of clover seed? I will take the whole of Scotland. If there be any Scotch Members present, I ask them whether they do not in their country import the clover seed from England? They do not grow it. I undertake to say that there are not ten counties in the United Kingdom which are interested in the exportation of clover seed out of their own borders. Neither

have they any of this article in Ireland. But yet we have clover seed excluded from the Farmers, although they are not interested as a body in its Protection at all. Again, take the article of beans. There are lands in Essex where they can grow them alternate years with wheat. I find that beans come from that district to Mark Lane; and I believe also that in some parts of Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire they do the same: but how is it with the poor lands of Surrey, or the poor downlands of Wiltshire? Take the whole of the counties. How many of them are there which are exporters of beans, or send them to market? You are taxing the whole of the Farmers who do not sell their beans for the pretended benefit of a few counties or districts of counties where they do. Mark you, where they can grow beans on the stronger and better soils, it is not in one case out of ten that they grow them for the market. They may grow them for their own use; but when they do not cultivate beans, send them to market, and turn them into money, those Farmers can have no interest whatever in keeping up the money price of that which they never sell. Take the article of oats. How many Farmers are there who ever have oats down on the credit side of their books, as an item upon which they rely for the payment of their Rents? The Farmers may, and do generally, grow oats for feeding their own horses; but it is an exception to this rule, and a rare exception too, where the Farmer depends upon the sale of his oats to meet his expenses. Take the article of hops. You have a Protection upon them for the benefit of the growers in Kent, Sussex, and Surrey; yet the cultivators of hops are taxed for the Protection of others in articles which they do not themselves produce. Take the article of cheese. Not one Farmer in ten in the country makes his own cheese, and yet they and their servants are large consumers of it. But what are the counties which have the Protection in this article? Cheshire, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, part of Derbyshire, and Leicestershire. Here are some four or five dairy counties having an interest in the Protection of cheese; but recollect that those counties are peculiarly hardly taxed in beans and oats, because in these counties, where they are chiefly dairy farms, they are most in want

of artificial food for their cattle. . . . Take the whole of the hilly district, and the down county of Wiltshire; the whole of that expanse of downs in the South of England; take the Cheviots, where the flockmasters reside; the Grampians in Scotland; and take the whole of Wales. They are not benefited in the slightest degree by the Protection on these articles; but, on the contrary, you are taxing the very things they want. They require provender as abundantly and cheaply as they can get it; allowing a free importation of food for cattle is the only way in which those counties can improve the breed of their lean stocks, and the only manner in which they can ever bring their land up to anything like a proper state of fertility. I will go further, and say that Farmers with this soil, I mean the stock Farmers, which you will find in Hertfordshire and Surrey, Farmers with large capitals, arable Farmers, I say those men are deeply interested in having a free importation of food for their cattle, because they have their poor land. This land of its own self does not contain the means of its increased fertility; and the only way is the bringing in of an additional quantity of food from elsewhere, that they can bring up their farms to a proper state of cultivation. I have been favoured with an estimate made by a very experienced, clever Farmer in Wiltshire—probably hon. gentlemen will bear me out when I say a man of great intelligence and skill, and entitled to every consideration in this House—I refer to Mr. Nathaniel Atherton, Kington, Wilts. That gentleman estimates that upon 400 acres of land he could increase his profits to the amount of £280, paying the same Rent as at present, provided there was a free importation of foreign grain of all kinds. He would buy 500 quarters of oats at 15s., or the same amount in beans or peas at 14s., or 15s. a sack, to be fed on the land or in the yard, by which he would grow 160 additional quarters of wheat, and 230 quarters of barley, and gain an increased profit of £300 upon his sheep and cattle. His plan embraces the employment of an additional capital of £1,000, and he would pay £150 a year more for labour. . . . I think I could give you from every county the names of some of the first-rate Farmers who are as ardent Free Traders as I am."

Notable decrease of crime and pauperism since Free Trade.

The gigantic growth of pauperism under the Corn Laws of 1815 and 1829 has already been noticed. With pauperism hand-in-hand went crime, and, as has been seen, the Farmer was practically forced at times to pay a blackmail to preserve his property from the criminal depredations of the starving poor. Since the abolition of the Corn Laws in 1846, though the population of the United Kingdom has grown from 28,000,000 to 35,000,000, the number of convictions for crime has positively declined from 40,000 in 1847 to 14,000 at the present time, whereas "the dear corn years, from 1809 to 1818, swelled the list of crimes from 5,350 in 1809 to 14,254 in 1818, and so changed the habits of the people that in 1828 the criminals were 16,744, and in 1829, 18,675." In the promotion of indigence it is hopeless to endeavour to distinguish the respective agencies of Protection and of the old Poor Law, prior to 1834, which stimulated the evil it was enacted to mitigate. All that is certain is that the dimensions of pauperism, yearly swelling, were threatening the speedy exhaustion of the Ratepayer. In the case of pauperism as of crime, the statistics which begin with the year 1849 show not merely a relative, but an astonishing absolute, decline from 201,000 able-bodied paupers in England and Wales to 110,000 in 1886. In the decade 1840-50, in which Protection came to an end, there was one pauper to every twenty-one inhabitants; in 1886 but one to every thirty-three. The fact, to which attention is sometimes called, that the expenditure upon paupers has, nevertheless, increased is conclusive evidence of the higher standard of comfort which has, since the introduction of Free Trade, extended to all classes and found its way even into the workhouse wards. The appalling distresses of the agricultural labourer in 1843 are now, happily, unknown, though it is true that much may yet be done to improve his lot. So long as he remained in the miserable plight of which we read in the years of Protection, it was impossible materially to alleviate the condition of the dependent recipients of public charity. The increase of comfort to this class is the gauge of the greater well-being of the class immediately above them.

Even if it were possible that the Farmers could be so

How Protection affects the agricultural labourer.

blind to the real issues as to support a Protective movement, it is incredible that the agricultural labourers should not have learnt wisdom from the terrible experience of the past. It has been suggested of late by the leaders of the Protectionist movement that, though Protection to agriculture would increase the price of bread, this would be more than compensated to artisans by the increased demand which a contracted market would ensure. This astounding paradox is even less specious than that which was currently put forward by the advocates of monopoly, who assured the agricultural labourer that high prices enabled the Farmer to give more than proportionately high wages.* A comparison of agricultural labourers'

* The foundation of this fallacy is the historic fact that a *lasting* dearness of corn tends to bring with it a corresponding rise in wages. In his "Six Centuries of Work and Wages" (vol. i., p. 62) Mr. Thorold Rogers observes of the years 1315-21: "Then famine prevailed, the people perished for lack of food, and the most conclusive proof of famine is afforded, for wages obtained a real and permanent rise, owing to a scarcity of hands prolonged for a considerable time, and thereupon effecting a lasting increase of wages; for temporary dearth rather depresses wages. It needs a considerable reduction in the number of those who seek employment to bring about a real increase of wages, and this state of things must last till the increased rate becomes familiar or customary." In the transient or fitful dearness produced by Corn Laws, therefore, wages are directly depressed. The increased cost of the means of subsistence enforces limits upon the expenditure of that numerous class with whom the margin remaining after the supply of the necessaries of life had previously been but narrow. Economy is practised in the purchase of clothes and household furniture. Servants are dismissed. Thus, at the same time, there takes place a contraction of direct employment, and a contraction of demand for commodities. And while the supply of labour is stimulated, recruits are added to it from the ranks of those who have hitherto held themselves just above the wage-earning class. Wages are steadily pushed downwards, while the strain on the efforts of those employed to earn a minimum of subsistence becomes proportionately great. The inquiries into the distresses of the weavers show that in 1790, with wheat at 56s. a quarter, the wage for weaving a yard of muslin was 15d.; in 1812, with wheat at 120s. a quarter, only 6d. This was not the effect of the competition of machinery, the application of steam power to weaving dating from 1814, after which time distress gradually reached a climax. But, confining ourselves to the period before steam-power looms, the effect of the Corn Laws upon the lot of the poor is illustrated by a table showing the fall of wages in the weaving industry, and the weavers' diminished command of the necessaries of life in the three septennial periods between 1797 and 1818. It is to be noted that the weavers' calling is one which requires no outlay, and is easily learnt, as well by persons of an active as of a sedentary habit and by comparatively young children. Hence it is peculiarly responsive to the overcrowding of the labour market

wages during the years of Protection (1821 to 1840) with those obtaining during the years of Free Trade (1878 to 1887) is conclusive refutation of this fallacy. During the former years wages averaged less than 10s. a week, and wheat 58s. a quarter; during the latter years wages averaged 14s. a week, and wheat only 39s. 10d. a quarter.*

If under the Corn Laws this extra 5s. went in Rent, the arising from Corn Laws. The table referred to gives the following figures:—

First Seven Years—From 1797 to 1804.

100 lbs.	Flour.	Wages for weaving one piece, 24 yds.
142 lbs.	Oatmeal.	of 6-4ths Bolton cambric, 120
826 lbs.	Potatoes.	shots per inch (say one week's
55 lbs.	Butcher's Meat.	work for a weaver) 26s. 8d.
4) 1,123		
281	General Average.	

Second Seven Years—From 1804 to 1811.

79 lbs.	Flour.	Wages in this period for the same, 20s.
115 lbs.	Oatmeal.	Decline in money 25 per cent.
720 lbs.	Potatoes.	
38 lbs.	Butcher's Meat.	
4)952		
238	General Average.	Decline in second seven years, as compared with first, 16⅔ per cent. in the command the weaver had over the necessaries of life.

Third Seven Years—From 1811 to 1818.

60 lbs.	Flour.	Wages in this period for the same
79 lbs.	Oatmeal.	14s. 7d. Decline in money 27 per
360 lbs.	Potatoes.	cent. compared with second period
26 lbs.	Butcher's Meat.	and 45 per cent, as compared with first period.
4)525		
131	General Average.	Decline in third seven years, as compared with second seven years, 45 per cent., and as compared with first seven years 55⅓ per cent.

From Mr. Needham's table. See "Analysis of Evidence on Hand-loom Weavers, 1834-35," p. 10.

* In France agriculture enjoys considerable protection, yet the Paris correspondent of the *Leeds Mercury* writes: "I observe a paragraph in the *Gironde* which states that 'several wealthy landed proprietors in the Médoc have just reduced the wages of their labourers from 2f. 50c. to 1f. 75c. for the men, and from 1f. to 75c. for the women. The unfortunate people who have not accepted the reduction have been summarily dismissed.' . . . In English money, therefore, the agricultural labourer of the Médoc will henceforth receive for his labours—that, it must be remembered, endure from sunrise to sunset—the liberal sum of 9s. 11d. a week, if he works seven days a week, and never has a moment, not even on the Sunday, to call his own; or 8s. 6d. a week if he has his Sabbath, and even then he has no half-day holiday on the Saturday."—*Mark Lane Express*, May 31, 1886.

Farmer derived little benefit from it, since the consumption by a Landlord's family of agricultural produce is comparatively limited.* Dispersed among the families of the agricultural labourers, on the other hand, it both increased the demand for meat, and at the same time enriched those traders upon whose welfare the Farmer is, as has been shown, dependent. "When the policy of Protection to agriculture finally disappeared in 1848," says Mr. Caird, "the great bulk of the people had ceased to know anything of butcher's meat, except as an occasional Sunday luxury." The increased cheapness of wheat which has sprung from Free Trade has been the main cause of the greater consumption of meat, and the consequent rise in its price.† With wheat reduced to 4s. a bushel instead of 6s., the weekly

* "In consequence of the high price of corn, a change takes place in the division of income, which cannot remain without influence upon the usual demand for commodities. It is true that through this latter circumstance the corn producers gain just as much as the consumers of corn have lost, but it is very doubtful whether the former carry their surplus-demand precisely to those commodities from which the latter, in consequence of their diminished capacity of expenditure, have withdrawn." W. Roscher, "Ueber Kornhandel und Theuerungspolitik," Stuttgart, 1852.

† Corn is the first necessary of life, and accordingly, when its supply is deficient, the greatest endeavours are made by the poor to maintain their accustomed consumption. This can only be done, if at all, by a diminution of the consumption of articles of secondary necessity, such as meat. The effect upon these, therefore, is to lower their price in sympathy with the diminution of demand; the effect upon corn, on the other hand, is to raise its price more than in proportion to the deficiency. Tooke, in illustration of this law, which had been first noticed by Gregory King a century earlier, mentions that in the harvests of 1795-96 there was a deficit of one-eighth of the average yield. Prices, however, instead of rising only 12 to 13 per cent., rose from 48s. 11d. to 75s. 8d., or 54·6 per cent. Tooke notes cases in which the prices of corn in England rose 100 to 200 per cent. when the harvest had only fallen one-sixth to one-third below the average, and importation from abroad had aided in mitigation of the effect of the deficit. Thus the price of corn is very far from varying, as might have been supposed, in inverse ratio to the supply. This tendency to excessive appreciation, and the corresponding tendency of articles of secondary necessity to fall in price, are both accentuated by Corn Laws. When, as under Free Trade, corn is abundant, as it is impossible to increase its consumption beyond a restricted limit, the consumer naturally applies his surplus, in the first instance, to the purchase of other farm produce. What remains over is expended upon further necessaries or luxuries, and thus, by affording occasion for employment, cheap corn raises wages. On the other hand, the co-existence of dear corn and cheap meat is a symptom of destitution which has more than once appeared in the history of England. See "Six Centuries of Work and Wages," by Thorold Rogers, vol. ii., p. 423.

expenditure of the labourer upon wheat is 2s. 8d. instead of 4s. This leaves 1s. 4d. in his pocket at the end of the week, or 70s. at the end of the year, which otherwise must have been expended on wheat. The first luxury upon which this surplus is laid out is, naturally, an improved diet. If 1s. of the surplus were so employed, and meat were at 6d. a lb., a weekly addition of 2 lb. of meat at once takes place. This addition in seven labourers' families makes a difference of a stone of meat a week. Three hundred and fifty families, therefore, in a population of less than 2,000 persons, will consume an ox of 50 stone weight a week, and 52 such oxen in a year. Such are simply the plain consequences of a fall of 2s. in a bushel of wheat.

The imposition of a duty upon wheat involves to the agricultural labourer the converse of all this. "A 5s. duty," say the Protectionists, "would not raise the 4 lb. loaf more than from a farthing to a halfpenny, and this would be to a working man's family about 5½d. a week." Perhaps so; but 5½d. a week is £1 3s. 10d. a year, an appreciable percentage of the expenditure of the labourer, but not of the expenditure of the Landlord, into whose pocket the labourer's mite would find its way. The tax is, therefore, manifestly inequitable, since it presses hardest upon those least able to bear it.* But the tax upon wheat is not the whole of the tax which the labourer would have upon his shoulders.† By the Fair Trade

Protection only begins at the Five Shilling duty.

* Suppose that, as some of the "Fair Traders" anticipate, a 5s. duty should impose a food-tax of 6d. per week on every large family. If the income of such a family did not exceed 15s. a week—or, roughly, £40 a year—this would amount to a tax of 26s. a year, or ten and a half days' labour. Yet how lightly would such a tax affect the well-to-do! Its exactions would be in inverse proportion to the means of the tax-payer, a principle of taxation not hitherto generally received as either just or rational. In point of fact a 5s. duty would, according to a practical baker, the manager of the Woolwich Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society, be equivalent to a tax of a halfpenny on the quartern loaf. In a normal household of six persons in the East End of London the consumption of bread averages thirty-five half-quartern loaves a week. A rise of a halfpenny in the quartern would therefore represent a tax of more than 8d. a week or 34s. 8d. a year. See *St. James's Gazette*, Jan. 14, 1893.

† Protection can counterbalance the benefits of the most favourable conditions of soil and climate. A Consular Report issued in June, 1887, describes the agricultural labourer of Vera Cruz: "Comparing the condition of the agricultural labourer of this State with that of his English colleagues, it may be said that the two are equal as regards

system, which aims at supplanting Free Trade, clothing, furniture, every necessary of life, would be enhanced in price, and the labourer reduced to the state of abject destitution under which he groaned sixty years ago. It has been shown by Dr. Farr, on a comparison of years when wheat was at 60s. a quarter with years when it was at 45s. a quarter, that a rise of 2s. a bushel is followed by an increase of 3 per cent. in the bills of mortality.* The agricultural labourer would indeed be insane to support a movement which offers him death, indigence, or the workhouse.

If a 5s. duty on wheat would bring no benefit to the Farmer, and direct injury to the labourer, how would it operate with regard to the general consumer? It has been pointed out that "a change in the supply of a necessary of life is capable of producing effects on price much greater than in proportion to the extent of the change." † Assume, however, that the sole effect is to raise the price of wheat 5s. a quarter. The amount of wheat grown in the United Kingdom in 1891 was some 9,340,000 quarters; the amount of wheat imported from abroad was roughly 20,600,000 quarters.‡

What a Five Shilling duty costs the country.

When a country grows less wheat than it consumes, the price must rise above the level of other markets to the point which will pay freight and charges necessary to bring the quantity required. The addition of an import duty is simply an addition to those charges. Until, therefore, the price rises to such a height as will pay the whole expense of bringing wheat from other markets, and the duty as well, wheat will not be imported. But as that must necessarily take place in this country, it follows

food, but as regards housing and clothing the Vera Cruzan cannot but be commiserated. The high tariff levies on him a tax of about 70 per cent. on all he spends for clothing or other luxuries, except indeed tobacco, while the English labourer, under Free Trade, can clothe himself and his family at fair and natural prices."

* Mulhall's "Progress of the World," London, 1880; p. 134.

† See note on page 87.

‡ This is at the low estimate of 60 lbs. of wheat to a bushel, or 480 lbs. to a quarter, and 45 lbs. of flour to 60 lbs. of wheat. The *Mark Lane Express* (Jan. 17, 1887) gives reasons for preferring this to the Board of Trade estimate of not quite 61 lbs. of wheat to a bushel, and 49 lbs. of flour to their bushel of wheat. Other authorities consider that the basis should be 62 lbs. or even 63 lbs. to a bushel.

that the total tax exacted from the consumer would be £7,485,000, of which only £2,335,000 can be pretended to benefit agriculture. It is sometimes alleged that it is the foreigner who pays the duty on the imported wheat.* If the foreigner lower his prices until, with the 5s. import duty added, they remain at their present level, he may be amerced, but the British grower will derive no advantage. In fact, however, it is the home consumer who pays, not merely, as is unquestionable, for the advance caused by import duties in home-grown corn, but for the duty upon foreign corn as well. Suppose a contract for the delivery of 1,000 quarters of wheat in the Mersey from America at 35s. a quarter. The wheat arrives in the docks, and the English merchant pays the American consignor £1,750. When the wheat

* It was said by a Protectionist landlord, Lord Stanley of Alderley, in the autumn of 1887, that the Corn Law of March, 1887, had not raised the price of wheat in France. Immediately after harvest, no doubt, the price of wheat was low in France, owing to the competition artificially promoted by the Corn Law among the farmers, which compelled the weakest to realise at any price. But M. Guyot points out on p. 24 of "The French Corn Laws," that "the 5 franc duty, which added 2 francs to the previous duty, established a difference of very nearly 7 francs between the London and the Paris market price, and a difference of 9 fr. 25 c. between Paris and New York" on the 100 kilogrammes (1 cwt. 3 qrs. 24 lb.). (See further on this the note to p. 40). Moreover, the French have checked a rise in the price of bread in many parts by resort to the practice known in England as late as this century under the name of the "Assize of Bread." The mayors in France are enforcing their right to assess the price of bread. "However, it is impossible to force bakers to ruin themselves and become bankrupt with a light heart in order to secure rents to landowners. Bakers submit, diminish the quantity of flour, use more water, and bake the bread less well. . . . In a commune of the Department of the Cher the bakers have struck work, bread is wanting. The rows and disturbances of the good old days are revived. Mayors have been seen to point out officially bakers to the hatred of the population, and to declare them responsible for the price of bread. To them it is that the consumer pays directly. He does not see the trader in corn, still less the landowner. It is, therefore, easy to make the baker the scapegoat. The average price of the French loaf of 2 kilos. (4 lb. 6½ oz.) has, in fact, been raised about a penny." M. Guyot on "The French Corn Laws," pp. 27, 28.

In February, 1893, the municipal authorities of Marseilles, unable to persuade the bakers to accept the official assize of bread, occupied the bakeries with the military and police, and aided by the Government depôts, themselves undertook the supply of the city. The issue of the struggle was the capitulation of the bakers, probably with the intention of finding compensation in the manner indicated by M. Guyot.

is landed, the 5s. per quarter duty, amounting to £250, is paid to the Government officers by the English merchant, who then sells it to the miller for £2,000 with a percentage for profits. Thus the 5s. duty is paid by the consumer, and the tax so imposed upon him is obnoxious to the two most serious objections which can be raised to any tax: first, that the taxpayer is mulcted in an infinitely greater amount than the public treasury receives; and, secondly, that an uncertainty attaches to the impost, which in no two consecutive years will represent the same proportion of the value of the article taxed. How greatly the removal of the duty has, concurrently with other Free Trade measures, induced consumption of farm produce, is matter of common knowledge. The average prices of meat during the last decade of the Protective period (1836–46) were lower than in the ten years 1868–78. Yet the labouring classes can more than keep up with the increase. In December, 1883, Mr. Giffen, in his address to the Statistical Society on "The Progress of the Working Classes in the last Half-Century," confirms the estimate of Sir James Caird ("Landed Interest," p. 65), that the wages of the agricultural classes have risen 60 per cent. since the repeal of the Corn Laws. Although a slight decline has set in since 1883, there has been a further compensating fall in the general prices of commodities. Since the repeal of the Corn Laws there has been a very substantial fall in the prices of all the prime articles of the Labourer's consumption, excepting meat; and "twenty-five years ago," says Mr. Caird, "the agricultural population could rarely afford to eat butcher's meat more than once a week. Some of them now have it every day."* The consumption per head of other articles of food, the produce of the Farmer, has even more largely increased. For the year 1840, when Protection was the accepted doctrine of the country, as compared with the year 1885, the difference stands as follows:—

The Farmer's well-being associated with the well-being of the Labourer.

* "The Landed Interest and the Supply of Food," London, 1878.

IMPORTED ARTICLES RETAINED FOR HOME CONSUMPTION.

CONSUMPTION PER HEAD (UNITED KINGDOM).

	1840.	1892.
Bacon, lbs	0·1	13·11
Butter ,, ...	1·05	6·14
Cheese ,, ...	0·92	5·86 *

But a few lines of description are more eloquent than figures. At the close of the Protective period, and in the first years of the new system, Mr. Caird was despatched by the *Times* to take a survey of the agricultural situation. He thus describes the state of things in the Southern counties—a state of things, it must be remembered, much ameliorated since the days of the old Poor Law, and even since the then recent revelations of agricultural destitution of 1843-44. "Six shillings a week," he says, "was the wage given for ordinary Labourers by the most extensive Farmer in South Wilts, who holds nearly 5,000 acres of land, great part of which is his own property; 7s., however, is the more common rate, and out of that the Labourer has to pay 1s. a week for the rent of his cottage. If prices continue low, it is said that even these wages must be reduced. Where a man's family can earn something at outdoor work, this pittance is eked out a little; but in cases where there is a numerous young family, great pinching must be endured. We were curious to know how the money was economised, and heard from a Labourer the following account of a day's diet. After doing up his horses he takes breakfast, which is made of flour with a little butter and water 'from the tea-kettle' poured over it. He takes with him to the field a piece of bread and (if he has not a young family and can afford it) cheese, to eat at midday. He returns home in the afternoon to a few potatoes, and possibly a little bacon, although only those who are better off can afford this. The supper very commonly consists of bread and water. The appearance of the Labourers showed, as might be expected from such meagre diet, a want of that vigour and activity which

The Labourer in 1851.

* The figures are taken from the official "Statistical Abstract for the United Kingdom," 1840 and 1892.

marks the well-fed ploughmen of the Northern and Midland counties."*

The real object of the Fair Trade movement.

The British Farmer must reflect that the cry of Protection to Agriculture is but the echo of the far louder clamour for Protection to Manufactures. The manufacturers who now seek Protection are necessarily not less hostile than in 1840 to legislation which would tend to raise wages without raising their profits. But, finding the Protectionist party in the country weak, they have endeavoured to recruit its numbers by adding to their demand for an "*adequate*" import duty upon manufactured imports, a "*moderate*" duty on American corn. The Farmer will do well to notice this significant selection of qualifying adjectives. And while the Fair Traders "wink," as Mr. Gladstone put it, "with one eye at the counties, they wink with the other at the towns," for at the same moment that they angle for the Farmers' votes by proposing the duty on American corn, they advocate systematic legislation, the object of which shall be eventually to strike a bargain with our Colonies by admitting colonial corn duty free in return for the abolition of colonial tariffs in favour of our manufactures. The first effect of this legislation will be, it is said, that America will reduce its Tariffs, and British manufacturers will increase their exports in return for American commodities.

Let the Farmer consider for a moment the consequences of this, the earliest anticipated effect of the Fair

* "English Agriculture," London, 1851. According to M. Dubost, former Director of the School of Agriculture at Grignon, every Frenchman ought to have at least 700 grammes (about 1½ lb.) of wheaten bread a day. Between 1881-86 it is computed from the returns of produce and imports that the amount daily consumed in France was 608 grammes, a deficit of 90 grammes. As this is a calculation of averages, it follows that the amount for individuals of the poorer classes must be considerably less than 600 grammes. Soldiers, for instance, receive 1,000 grammes a day each man, besides 300 grammes of meat and 130 grammes of vegetables. But as for the agricultural labourer and small farmer, "in many places there are only one or two meals of pork per week, and very rarely any butcher's meat." M. Hervé-Mangon, in a paper read before the Academy of Sciences in 1874, remarked: "It is unfair to reproach the country labourer with the little energy shown in his work and with his excessive slowness. In fact, the average work done in our country districts is in proportion to the average nourishment, and the daily labour, taken as a whole, cannot be increased except by ameliorating the food." M. Guyot on "The French Corn Laws," pp. 19, 20.

Trade movement, and, indeed, its immediate object. *The high Tariff of the United States, by its exclusion of our manufactures, operates as a protection to the British and a tax upon the American Farmer.* For example: The United States imposes a duty of 75c. upon coal. This practically excludes our coal from America. But the effect of this is that steamers carrying wheat from America to the Tyne are forced to make the return journey in ballast. Thus, since the cost of the return journey is not borne by return freight, it has to be borne by the outgoing cargo, the wheat. "Take two steamers of a thousand tons register, and with carrying capacity of 10,000 quarters of grain, bound from the Tyne, one for Odessa, the other for New York. The voyages are about equal in length. The Odessa-bound vessel takes out ninety-five keels* of coal at say, £14 per keel—£1,330—and brings home 10,000 quarters of wheat at 4s. 6d. per quarter—£2,250—making a total from both cargoes of £3,580. The American-bound vessel leaves the Tyne in ballast, for owing to the 75c. duty upon coal, merchants cannot afford to handle it.† The rules for loading in force at American ports reduce the carrying

Is it the Farmer's interest to support it?

* A "keel" of coals is twenty-one tons.

† This is an example of the impediments in the way of commerce, and the consequent loss of employment to the working classes caused by a Protective Tariff. A similar result followed the imposition of the German Corn Duties in 1885. Notwithstanding Prince Bismarck's threat to suppress the reports of all Chambers of Commerce adverse to his protective system, the Mannheim Chamber of Commerce, at the beginning of 1886, ventured to draw up a statement of its experience of the new Corn Laws. Business, it reported, had suffered a heavy blow. "The North German, Wetterau, and Hesse wheat formerly exported to Belgium, and the Mecklenburg and Holstein grain formerly sent to England, simply found a market in South Germany in consequence of the advanced duties on foreign grain. Thus, while the effect was clearly in the direction of limiting the choice of grain for consumers, Germany lost an export trade, and the German railways and merchants a business which will unquestionably find its way into other channels. The South German millers, moreover, found that they could replace the foreign by the extremely poor native grain to only a limited extent. The export trade to Switzerland declined, while Hungary sent the produce of her rich harvests over the Arlberg line to that market, and South Russia sent her grain also to Switzerland, *viâ* Genoa and Marseilles, instead of through Mannheim." "Mannheim," concludes the report, "is hereby precluded from maintaining any longer her position as the chief emporium of foreign wheat, and is thus even absolutely compelled to surrender more and more her trade to the Mediterranean port of Genoa."—*Mark Lane Express*, Jan. 25 and July 5, 1886.

power of the steamer mentioned to 9,000 quarters; and to make her total earnings those of the Odessa vessel, a freight of 8s. a quarter must be obtained—9,000 by 8s., £3,600."* If, therefore, the effect of the 5s. duty on wheat recommended by the Fair Traders should be, as they expect, the reduction of the American Tariff, American wheat would be poured into this country at a cheaper rate than it is at present in return for the increased export of our manufactures. Even if the British Farmer could contrive to secure to himself the 5s. duty, which it has been shown he could not do, he might well pause before lending his aid to a movement which could not fail, if successful, to bring about this result. Nay, more, he must upon reflection feel assured that if the American Government were to justify the expectation of the Fair Traders and to propose a bargain reducing their Tariff in return for an abolition of the 5s. duty, the Farmers' interest, supposing it to be a real one, would not be allowed for a moment to stand in the way. The Farmer is therefore exhorted to join in an enterprise which, if unsuccessful in its assault upon foreign Tariffs, will, at any rate, leave him saddled with enhanced Rents, and which, if successful, will abandon him to sustain that burden as best he can, in face of the fiercer competition of the United States and the Colonies conjoined. Nor is this the whole of the weight with which the Fair Trader would load the British Farmer. Fair Trade is, and few of its advocates pretend to dispute the fact, Protection. It begins with demands which it terms "adequate" and "moderate," but unless it fails to follow the rule of Protectionism in every country where it has obtained ascendancy, it will perpetually seek to heighten the Protective Tariff.† Even in the United

The Fair Traders will throw the Farmer overboard.

* "Practical Questions for Producer and Consumer in England and America." By Major Jones, U.S. Consul, Newcastle-on-Tyne, 1880.

† Of the "adequacy" the protected manufacturer always assumes to be the judge. A writer in the *Country Gentleman* (Albany, N.Y.) tells a story of a New Jersey fire-brick manufacturer, who came before the Congressional Committee indignant at his wrongs. The duty was only 50 per cent., but "the trade," so he informed the Committee, "said his bricks were so —— bad they would rather pay the tax and buy a good foreign article." He demanded, for his protection and his right, that the Committee should make the duty 150 per cent.; then the trade would have to buy of him, and after that he assured the Committee he would try to furnish a better quality.

States, though there were duties exceeding 70 per cent. *ad valorem*, the Protectionists demanded and obtained further enhancements by the M'Kinley Tariff. But what would high Tariffs at home mean to the British Farmer? They would mean that he would be called upon to pay literally half as much again for every implement which he uses, for the stuffs he consumes, for the slender luxuries he enjoys. Of this plunder the manufacturers would appropriate by far the largest share.* They would be able to persuade the artisans dependent upon them that Protection had in some degree raised their wages, while they would be silent as to the less obvious fact that it had disproportionately heightened the cost of living; and the strength of the combined

* "No part of the Canadian people were more grievously deceived by the men now in power than those Farmers who believed that the prices of their grain, butter, wool, cheese, cattle sheep, and garden fruit, would be raised by the imposition of duties on American cattle and farm products, that their home markets would be greatly increased, and that they would be rendered independent of the fluctuations of prices in other countries. They have continued to clear forest land, to drain and fertilise what they had cleared, to erect new buildings, and to improve and increase their stock of cattle. They find, notwithstanding all the fine promises made, and notwithstanding all their unremitting efforts to improve their condition, that their farms are of less value by millions, and that although they produce more, the amount they realise for what they sell is less by millions than it was five or six years ago." *Ontario Globe*, quoted by the *Mark Lane Express*, April 26, 1886, which adds: "One estimate puts the depreciation at 20,000,000 dollars. Of course the tariff has raised the cost of clothing, implements, and other necessaries."

The same cry is heard from the United States. Mr. Bookwalter, of Springfield, Ohio, puts the case succinctly in an interview with a representative of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. See *Mark Lane Express*, Sept. 15, 1884. "To all the people directly or indirectly engaged in the land the Protective Tariff is a sheer spoliation. The Farmer has to pay dearer for everything that he buys, in order that a mere handful of manufacturers may be able to make a profit. Are you aware that our Protective Tariff costs the Farmer almost as much money as the whole of the sum he receives from his exports? That is to say, our duties tax the Farmer 600,000,000 dollars per annum, which is as near as may be the total sum he receives for his exports. Now, the net average profits of the industries specially protected by the tariff, taking one year with another, do not average more than about 350,000,000 dollars a year. In other words, it would be into the Farmer's pocket, if he were allowed to pension off the whole of the protected manufacturers, and give them 350,000,000 dollars a year in exchange, simply for the liberty to buy what he wants in the cheapest market. See, further, the "Western Farmer in America," by A. Mongredien, London, 1880. It is to the revolt of the Farmer that the repeal of the M'Kinley Tariff will be largely due.

forces of a successful Protectionism would disclose to the Farmer, wishful to retrace his steps, the extent of his folly and his disaster.

What Bounties will do for the Farmer.

Among the many failures which have paved the road of advance in economic wisdom has been the system of Bounties, now long since discarded in this country. In the last and at the beginning of the present century there existed bounties on flax culture, on the herring and whale fisheries, and on the exportation of wheat. The last dated from 1689. "The Government of King William," says Adam Smith,* "was not then fully settled. It was in no condition to refuse anything to the country gentleman from whom it was at that very time soliciting the first establishment of the annual land-tax." An Act was passed allowing a Bounty of 5s. per quarter on all British-grown wheat exported when the home price did not exceed 48s. a quarter. This Act was modified in 1773, so that the Bounty was not payable after the average exceeded 44s. a quarter, and in 1815 the Bounty was repealed. In point of fact no Bounty could have been claimed in any year after 1792, when the average price for the whole year was only 41s. 9d.†

History of Bounties on Wheat.

It was the operation of this Bounty on export, and thus indirectly on production, which furnished Adam Smith and Ricardo‡ with matter for their chapters on the inefficiency and mischief of the system. It inflicted, as Adam Smith shows, two different and cumulative taxes upon the people, for it first raised the price of the principal necessary of life, and, secondly, it taxed them directly for the purpose of levying the Bounty.

A proposal has been made by eminent members of the Conservative Party, which is not only obnoxious to the objections advanced by Adam Smith and Ricardo to the indirect encouragement of production by means of Bounties on exportation, but which exhibits original demerits of its own. In a speech delivered at Lincoln on the 9th November, 1886, Mr. Chaplin, after

* "Wealth of Nations," Book I., ch. xi. Digression concerning the variations in the value of silver, &c.

† Porter's "Progress of the Nation," ed. 1847, p. 147, note.

‡ Ricardo's "Principles of Political Economy and Taxation," ch. xx., xxi.

a prefatory remark that it would be easy to double the wheat production of this country, formulated a proposal to effect that end. He suggested that the proceeds of a duty upon foreign manufactured articles should be "directed to the encouragement of the wheat-growing interests of the country." Since that time the idea of a Bounty on home production, levied from a Protective Tariff generally put at 10 per cent. *ad valorem*, has been received with favour in every Chamber of Agriculture in the kingdom.

The burden imposed by Bounties.

Now, in the first place, such a Bounty would be, like the old Bounties on exportation, a double tax. The consumers of the commodities of which the price had been advanced through the operation of the tariff would be mulcted in their character of consumers. It is not to be forgotten that the advance in price could not be confined to the commodities manufactured abroad, but would necessarily extend to similar articles produced at home. The consumers would, in fact, be co-extensive with the community. The list of imported manufactures will show at once the searching severity of the burdens which would be thrust upon them. They would have to pay one-tenth additional price for brimstone, bristles, candles, caoutchouc, china, porcelain and earthenware, clocks, confectionery, drugs, dyeing and tanning stuffs, flax, tow, hemp, jute, glass, gutta-percha, leather, gloves, wrought copper and iron, zinc articles, oil, oil-seed cake, paper, petroleum, paper-making materials, saltpetre, spirits, sugar, manufactured tobacco, watches, wooden articles, woollen and worsted yarn, dried yeast, &c. &c. And besides the general advance of prices from which they would suffer, the public would also have to find the Bounty in their capacity of taxpayers. Under the Protectionist scheme a tariff supplies an easy method of raising public revenue.* If part of the revenue thus raised is applied to bounties the deficiency must be made good.

It may be said that the above argument rests upon the assumption that the imposition of a tariff for the purpose of encouraging a particular form of agricultural production is only contemplated as part of a more

* But as to its effect upon the revenue see preface, p. viii.

general scheme. But that is the most favourable standpoint from which to criticise Mr. Chaplin's proposal. Protectionist champions, with a wariness learnt from repeated defeats, and with the fear of the electorate before their eyes, are careful beyond all things of coming to close quarters with fact, or of filling out the unsubstantial outlines of their panaceas. If the suggestion is that the tariff should be raised for the sole purpose of application to the protection of wheat-growing, the case is worse. Mr. Chaplin does not commit himself to any details as to the rate at which the tariff should be fixed, but it is the general view of Protectionists that 10 per cent. is a minimum; and Fair Traders, whose principle is the neutralisation of the tariffs of foreign countries, must, of course, go a great deal further. Let us, however, suppose a tariff at the rate of 10 per cent. *ad valorem* upon all manufactured articles imported into the United Kingdom. In the year 1891 the value of all articles imported was £435,441,264. As Protectionists are always in difficulties when called upon to distinguish raw materials from manufactured articles, let us select most favourably to their argument by taking out of the total list of imports such as appear *prima facie* to be nothing more than raw material, and assuming these to be exempted from the tariff. Such articles are as follows, the values being taken in round numbers :—

Mr. Chaplin's proposal.

Articles.	Values.
Animals	£9,200,000
Bacon and Hams	9,400,000
Beef	4,400,000
*Bones	500,000
Corn, Flour, &c.	62,000,000
Raw Cotton	46,000,000
Indigo	1,000,000
Dye Woods	400,000
Eggs	3,500,000
*Feathers	950,000
Fish	2,800,000
Fruit	8,000,000
Carried forward	148,150,000

* These are examples of the impossibility of an accurate distinction between manufactured and unmanufactured articles, which the Protectionists imagine so easy. The finished product of one industry is often the raw material of another.

TOTAL LIST OF IMPORTS (*continued.*)

Articles.	Values.
Brought forward ...	£148,150,000
Guano	130,000
*Gum	1,000,000
Hair	880,000
*Hides	2,400,000
†Hops	980,000
*Lard	1,700,000
Meat	3,500,000
Copper Ore	4,000,000
Iron Ore	2,400,000
*Lead (Pig and Sheet)	2,000,000
Silver Ore	3,700,000
*Tin	2,500,000
*Zinc	1,300,000
Nuts	800,000
Onions	700,000
Pork	600,000
Potatoes	2,000,000
Poultry	700,000
Rice	2,800,000
*Rosin	400,000
Seeds	7,000,000
Raw Silk	1,600,000
*Skins and Furs	3,890,000
*Spices	1,000,000
Tea	10,700,000
*Teeth	540,000
Tobacco (unmanufactured) ...	2,100,000
Wine...	5,900,000
*Wood	14,900,000
*Wool and Woollen Rags	28,700,000
Total	258,970,000

If, then, from the total value of imports, viz., in round figures £435,400,000, there is deducted the value of the above unmanufactured articles, the residue will be £176,430,000 worth of manufactures on which the proposed 10 per cent. *ad valorem* duty is to be placed. Now, the existing wheat area of the United Kingdom is, roundly, 2,390,000 acres.‡ The 10 per cent. duty, amounting to £17,643,000, distributed among the

† It must be remembered, however, that Lord Salisbury in his speech at Hastings on May 18, 1892, endorsed the suggestion of a duty on hops.

‡ 1891. Stat. Abstr., 1892, p. 173.

2,390,000 wheat-growing acres will amount to a Bounty of £7 an acre, or, taking three quarters to the acre, of more than 45s. a quarter. No doubt Mr. Chaplin's anticipations would be verified and the wheat area very speedily doubled. Even then the Bounty would remain at the comfortable sum of £3 10s. per acre, or 22s. 6d. a quarter, a tax on the public which would add many millions to the Landlords' Rents.

Is the proposed Bounty to be upon acreage or yield? This point, again, has been left in a convenient haze. There are analogous precedents in the statute book for both, for by the 23 Geo. II. c. 24, s. 11, the Herring Fishery Bounty was upon the tonnage of the vessels; while by the 26 Geo. II. c. 23, s. 6, it was upon the barrel of fish caught. If extension of wheat area be the object, it would plainly be best attained by a Bounty on the acreage sown. Then the phenomena of the time of the Corn Laws would recur. Old pastures would be broken up, down and heath land would be ploughed, and the taxpayers would very soon realise the truth of Adam Smith's observation that "Bounties upon production have been found by experience more liable to frauds than those upon exportation." The character of the cultivation would certainly be inferior, since in the face of free import of foodstuffs the Farmer of poor soil could not grow wheat to pay, and the Bounty being according to acreage ostensibly sown, his efforts would be directed to securing the State's liberality with as little expense to himself as possible. It would be found true, too, of the Farmers that "the usual effect of such Bounties is to encourage rash undertakers to adventure in a business which they do not understand, and what they lose by their own negligence and ignorance more than compensates all that they can gain by the utmost liberality of Government." The Bounty would profit one class only—the Landlords. Let us proceed to consider the more probable alternative, viz., that the proposed Bounty is to be a Bounty upon actual production.

Who would gain by Bounties on wheat?

Assuming for the moment that the Farmers will be the gainers, it follows that those Farmers will benefit most whose lands are already best suited for wheat, *e.g.*, the Farmers of Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire.

In other words, the greatest amount of assistance will be granted precisely to that class which is best equipped for competition. To be duly effective the Bounty should be discriminatingly adjusted—an impossible undertaking.

What would be the effect of such a Bounty upon prices, Farmers' Profits, and Landlords' Rents?

It was laid down by Ricardo, upon the assumption that England was a self-sustaining country, that the effect of a Bounty upon production would be to lower the price of corn by a sum equal to the Bounty paid. This would not be the consequence to-day. Our home-grown wheat is estimated at nine million quarters, our imported at twenty and a half million.* Let us, for simplicity, take the relation as one to two. Now, it is currently asserted by the more moderate of the Protectionists that wheat cannot be grown here under 40s. a quarter, that is, of course, at anything like the present Rents. But the average price of home-grown wheat in 1892 was 30s. 4d.† A Bounty of 9s. 8d. a quarter is therefore needed, at a low estimate, to enable wheat to continue to be grown here. Suppose such a Bounty enacted. At first the competition of supply would, in all probability, be such as still further to depress the price of foreign wheat. Let us suppose that it falls to 29s. 4d. a quarter. The price of English wheat then would no longer, as in the state of things contemplated by Ricardo, fall by the amount of the Bounty, *i.e.*, from 30s. 4d. to 20s. 8d.; it would simply fall, since there cannot be two prices for the same article in the same market, to the lowest figure at which foreign wheat can come, *i.e.*, to 29s. 4d. a quarter. Though the Bounty has caused a fall of 1s. a quarter in the value of his produce, yet the English Farmer is *ex hypothesi* paid by it 9s. 8d. a quarter over and above the market price, and thus receives 8s. 8d. a quarter to the good. But, just as in the case of import duties, this will fall to the Landlord through the competition of the Farmers among themselves. If, on the other hand, the importation of foreign wheat diminishes, in consequence of a contraction of the wheat-growing area of foreign

The effect of Bounties on Profits and Rents.

* See above, p. 89.

† *Mark Lane Express*, January 2nd, 1893.

countries following upon the fall in the price of English wheat, then the price of English wheat will rise. Let us suppose that it rises to 40s. 4d. Then, as before, the Farmer at home who had been accustomed to produce at 30s. 4d., and who has actually been selling at 29s. 4d., will expect to pocket the whole Bounty plus 10s., the difference between 30s. 4d. at which he was before producing, and 40s. 4d. at which he can now sell. This 19s. 8d. a quarter, however, will, as before, be presently intercepted by the Landlord in addition to the additional percentage* which measures the extravagance of the Farmer's hopes.

It was seen in the passage to which reference has just been made that the fixed duties of 1815 and 1829 maintained Rents at 20 per cent. and 10 per cent. respectively above their natural limits, *i.e.*, above the limits justified by the prices actually received by the Farmer. During the operation of the Sliding Scale between 1843 and 1846 Rents were fixed on the anticipation that the normal price would be 56s.; but the price actually realised during those years averaged 51s. 8d., therefore the Sliding Scale had the effect of keeping Rents at 8 per cent. above their natural limits. In its effects upon Rents it is evident that a Bounty upon acreage would operate just as a fixed import duty, while a Bounty on production would act like a Sliding Scale. A Bounty upon acreage would be as strong a stimulus to Rents as was in the time of the earlier Corn Law the practical prohibition which prevailed. Whatever the season, whatever the amount of importations, whatever the yield, the Farmer would reckon upon his Bounty, as his predecessor, no less deluded, reckoned upon being able to appropriate enhanced prices.

The effect of Bounties on Profits and Rents.

The positions in which the Landlords and Farmers would respectively find themselves at the end of a few years may be illustrated by the following figures, which, while they cannot profess to be exact as statistics, for the official estimate of Farmers' Profits in England and Wales as equal to one-half the full annual value of the lands is admittedly untrue to fact, yet show accurately

* p. 64 *supra*.

enough the effect of the proposed Bounties. For the sake of convenience, I take England and Wales only. The following, according to the official statistical abstract, is the relative income of Landlords and Farmers for 1891 :—

Landlords' Rents (Schedule B)	£41,804,179
Farmers' Profits	20,902,089

Let us now suppose a Bounty upon wheat acreage equivalent to 5s. a quarter import duty, *i.e.*, a Bounty (at three quarters an acre) of 15s. an acre. On the assumption that the wheat acreage will revert to its former proportion of one-tenth of the whole and stand at 5,692,489 acres,* and that Rents will, as before, rise 20 per cent. above the natural limit, the account will stand thus :—

Landlords' Rents	£47,351,419
Farmers' Profits	20,048,216

Suppose, on the other hand, that a Bounty is enacted upon actual production, and that the effect upon Rents of such a Bounty will be, for reasons already given, similar to those of a Sliding Scale, viz., to raise Rents 8 per cent. above the natural limit, then the account stands :—

Landlords' Rents	£46,839,095
Farmers' Profits	20,560,540

The effect in the first case will be the loss to the Farmers of £853,873 and a gain to the Landlords of £5,547,240 per annum. In the second case these sums will be represented by £341,549 for Farmers' losses, and £5,034,916 for Landlords' gains per annum respectively.† If this be the effect of a 5s. Bounty, that of the

* See p. 65 *suprà*.

† The argument may perhaps be stated more clearly as follows :—
On 5,692,489 acres (p. 65) 15s. per acre is £4,269.367 (*a*)
20% on this is £853,873 (*b*)
8% is £341,549 (*c*)
Adding to the Landlords' Rents for 1891—
Firstly (*a*) and (*b*),
Secondly (*a*) and (*c*),
and deducting from the Farmers' Profits
Firstly (*b*) and secondly (*c*),
we have at 20%—Landlords' Rents £47,351,419
Farmers' Profits £20,048,216 ;

desired 9s. Bounty would be, of course, to impart to Rents a far more vigorous stimulus.

Nor are these calculations imaginary. This has been the actual experience of the Bounty system abroad. Both beet-growers and beet-manufacturers have been for years complaining that they are on the verge of ruin. It is found, as always, that the advantages promised produce a competition so fierce among the manufacturers that their profits tend to fall below the ordinary rate. As for the beet-growers, where they are Tenants they find Rents rise so exorbitantly as to leave them no margin to live upon. And though the dealings of English Landlords towards Tenants have been traditionally more considerate than the relations between the same classes abroad, yet the history of the Corn Laws shows that even here Landlords cannot resist the double temptation which the promises of the Legislature and the hopes of the Tenants throw in their way.

The lessons of experience.

The following heads summarise the propositions which it has been the object of these pages to establish :—

1. A duty on corn will raise Rents beyond the proportion of the rise of prices. Not one penny of it would find its way to relieve the Farmer of Local Taxation.

2. A duty on Corn must in common justice to the non-corn-growing Farmers be accompanied by like duties on all agricultural produce. The Farmers will be thus taxing one another to an amount for which the general enhancement of prices will not afford compensation.

3. The expectation of steady remunerative prices to follow the imposition of a duty on corn has never been realised in the past. When prices decline after the imposition of a duty the difficulties of the Farmer are doubled.

4. The decline of prices has invariably followed the imposition of a duty, being a result effected by the competition of the Farmers among themselves artificially stimulated by a duty.

we have at 8%—Landlords' Rents £46,839,095
Farmers' Profits £20,560,540.
The Landlords therefore gain £5,547,240, or £5,034,916, as the case may be, and the Farmers lose as before £853,873, or £341,549.

5. A duty on corn tends to depress manufactures,* and, in consequence, to deprive the Farmer of his customers and lower the price of meat.

6. Depression in manufactures is followed by an increase in the Poor Rates borne by the Farmer, occasioned by the return to agricultural districts of labourers previously employed in the towns. This competition of labour depresses agricultural wages and unfavourably affects the rural population generally.

7. The American Tariff which the Protectionist manufacturer seeks to reduce really affords a protection to the British Farmer.†

8. If the Farmer is led by Protectionist manufacturers to join in the cry of Fair Trade, the 5s. duty, which is the price offered for his alliance, will infallibly be sacrificed at the slightest pressure.

9. The result of a successful Protectionist movement would, in any case, enhance the Farmer's and Labourer's cost of living, and, as has been shown, leave less in their pockets with which to defray the increased expense.

10. The effect upon Landlords' Rents and Farmers' Profits of bounties on acreage or production equivalent to five shillings a quarter import duty would be analogous to the effects of the old and new Corn Laws respectively.

The Committee of the Farmers' Alliance has, therefore, done good service to the Farmer and Labourer by recording the resolution that, "having carefully considered the present cry for 'Reciprocity' or 'Fair Trade,' it desires to express the opinion that any concerted action between the Farmers of the Kingdom and those manufacturers who are seeking to revive Protection would be most unwise on the part of the Farmers. The Committee believe that if

* This is why even Protectionist economists are generally opposed to duties on corn. Thus Friedrich List, in his "National System of Political Economy," says: "A nation which has already attained manufacturing supremacy can only protect its own manufacturers and merchants against retrogression and indolence by the free importation of means of subsistence and raw materials, and by the competition of foreign manufactured goods." (English edition; London, 1885).

† The writer would not have it supposed that he attaches serious importance to the maintenance of the price of Corn in England by this artificial means. It is to be observed, however, that it differs from a home protective duty in this, that it is too remote and uncertain to furnish a basis upon which to raise rents. Remunerative prices are after all, mainly a question of Rent.

Which will the Farmer and Labourer prefer—Protection or Reform?

it were possible by united effort to reverse the national policy of Free Trade and to restore Protection, the first interest to be sacrificed would be that of agriculture: that if duties upon corn could be re-imposed, they would be repealed at the first moment of difficulty, and this whichever party happened to be in power. The Committee cannot, therefore, but look upon the agitation for 'Fair Trade' as a delusion and a snare: a delusion, because whilst there is not the remotest chance of the nation listening to any proposal to tax its food, duties on farm produce, even if allowed, would not only be of no permanent benefit to the Tenant Farmer, but would prove injurious to his interest by raising the price of foreign corn, now so largely required for stock-feeding; a snare, because *the proposal is an expedient for keeping up Rents, and for staving off agricultural reforms*, which are the only true remedies in the hands of Parliament for restoring prosperity to the farming interest."*

Such is the opinion of men well qualified to judge of agricultural interests. It is not the place here to set forth at length the nature of the reforms indicated.† At least they may claim to follow paths marked out by prudent and enterprising Landlords, and to have no fellowship with disastrous and discredited systems. The wise words of Edmund Burke may be taken as the motto which indicates their principle: "A greater and more ruinous mistake cannot be fallen into than that the trades of agriculture and grazing can be conducted upon any other than the common principles of commerce."

* Resolution passed in 1887.

† See "Agriculture and the Land Laws,' I. Ownership; II. Tenancy. By the Author. London, 1881.

APPENDIX A.

The following Table, published by Mr. Grey, of Dilston, in the Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society, shows the rental of a portion of the Greenwich Hospital Estates in Northumberland, exclusive of the mines and fishings, 1793-94 and 1814-15.

	1793-94.	1814-15.	Increase per cent.
	£	£	
Newton	750	1,400	
Tarisclaws	550	960	
Chillingham Barns (part of it clay) ...	550	900	
East Lilburn (turnip loam)	800	1,600	
Wooperton (turnip loam)...	400	1,200	
Fenton Demesne (part wet and strong) ...	500	600	
Fenton Townland	800	1,600	
Doddington (South)	730	1,500	
Doddington (North)	1,200	2,000	
Horton (turnip loam)	650	1,800	
	£6,950	£15,560	Inc. 95 p.c.

APPENDIX B.

A TABLE OF THE LAND RENTAL OF THIRTY PARISHES IN SCOTLAND IN 1791–6 AND IN 1832–40.

PARISH.	Rental in 1791-6.	Rental in 1832-40.	Increase per cent.
	£	£	
Kinneller	900	3,000	
Udney...	2,000	7,000	
Newdeer	3,000	8,940	
St. Fergus	2,838	5,720	
King Edward...	2,285	5,770	
Ochiltree	3,000	8,176	
Ardrossan	2,970	7,800	
Dalry	6,350	17,712	
Dalrymple	1,570	5,192	
Dunlop	3,000	7,864	
Monkton and Presthick	2,000	4,509	
Straitor	3,000	9,000	
Girvan...	3,200	12,000	
Ballantree	2,000	7,465	
Stevenson	1,170	3,836	
Old Cumnock	3,000	8,000	
Kirkmichael	2,500	9,330	
Inveravan	2,294	5,055	
Swinton and Simfron	4,030	8,000	
Merton	2,400	6,000	
Eccles...	11,000	20,000	
Polwarth	1,000	1,730	
Cockburnspath and Old Cambus ...	4,500	8,000	
Wamphray	1,900	4,000	
Applegarth and Sibbaldbine ...	2,500	6,680	
Tundergarth	1,800	3,000	
St. Mungo	1,800	4,000	
Ruthwell	1,600	4,527	
Cumbertrees	2,800	8,000	
Dornock	1,760	8,300	
	£84,167	£213,606	Inc. 153 p.c.

"The rise of Rents in England has no doubt been equally great, but there are no public sources from which the information can be obtained."

APPENDIX C.

Comparative Table of the Condition of Farmers and Manufacturers under the Protective System.

I.—Prohibition of Imported Wheat till price was at 80s. a quarter. (*See p.* 12.)

Year.	Rent Point.	Average price of Wheat.	Condition of Farmers.	Condition of Manufacturers.
1815 ...	80/-	65/7	Distress.	Trade bad. Distress.
1816 ...	80/-	78/6	Not prosperous, from low prices in preceding years.	Do. do.
1817 ...	80/-	96/11	Prosperous.	Distress. Disturbances in manufacturing districts.
1818 ...	80/-	86/3	Prosperous.	Great distress.
1819 ...	80/-	74/6	Losses from falling prices.	Climax of distress. Tumults and loss of life at Manchester. "Peterloo Massacre."
1820 ...	80/-	67/10	Increased losses from falling prices.	Symptoms of improvement.
1821 ...	80/-	56/1	Great distress. Committee of House of Commons to inquire into causes of. (*See pp.* 27-40.)	Trade improved. Wages rising.
1822 ...	80/-	44/7	Distress increased. Continued inquiries of Committee of House of Commons.	Continued improvement. Increase in the public revenue.
1823 ...	80/-	53/4	Continued great distress.	Do. do.
1824 ...	80/-	63/11	Do. do.	Do. do.
1825 ...	80/-	68/6	Continued great agitation for reform of the Corn Laws.	Distress arising from financial disturbances.
1826 ...	80/-	58/8	Distress continued.	Do. do.
1827 ...	80/-	58/6	Do. do.	Mitigation of distress.
1828 ...	80/-	60/5	Do. do.	Do. do.
II.—The Sliding Scale Law of 1829. (*See p.* 29.)				
1829 ...	64/-	66/3	Could pay rents.	Trade bad.
1830 ...	64/-	64/3	Do. do.	Manufacturing distress mentioned in King's Speech.
1831 ...	64/-	66/4	Do. do.	Trade bad.

Year.	Rent Point.	Average price of Wheat.	Condition of Farmers.	Condition of Manufacturers.
1832 ...	64/-	58/8	Commencement of distress.	Trade bad.
1833 ...	64/-	52/11	Agricultural distress mentioned in King's Speech. Committee of House of Commons.	Trade improving.
1834 ...	64/-	46/2	Great distress.	Trade improving. Wages rising.
1835 ...	64/-	39/4	Extreme distress.	Trade good. Wages rising.
1836 ...	64/-	48/6	Extreme distress. Committee of Houses of Lords and Commons to inquire.	Do. do.
1837 ...	64/-	55/10	Slight improvement.	Trade declining.
1838 ...	64/-	64/7	Could pay rents.	Distress.
1839 ...	64/-	70/8	Do. do.	Distress increased.
1840 ...	64/-	66/4	Do. do.	Great distress.
1841 ...	64/-	64/4	Do, do.	Extreme distress.
1842 ...	64/-	57/3	Complaints.	Do. do.
			III.—The Sliding Scale Law of 1842. (*See p.* 61.)	
1843 ...	56/-	50/1	Distress.	Slight improvement.
1844 ...	56/-	51/3	Do. Destitution of labourers. Incendiarism.	Improvement.
1845 ...	56/-	50/10	Continued distress. Motion for Committee of Inquiry.	Slight improvement.
1846 ...	56/-	54/8	Continued distress. Repeal of the Corn Laws.	Relapse.

From this Table it appears :—

(1) That the prosperity of agriculture and manufactures was never contemporaneous; that of the former depending upon high, that of the latter upon low, prices of wheat.

(2) That under the law which prohibited the import of wheat until the price had reached 80s. a quarter, and which remained in force from 1815 to 1828, there were two years only (1817, 1818) during which prices reached the point contemplated by the Act of 1815, to which rents had been adjusted. There were, on the other hand, twelve years during which prices were below the expected level. During the two favourable years the average above the expected level was 11/7 a quarter; during the twelve unfavourable years the average below was 17/6 a quarter.

(3) That the prosperity of the Farmers in those years during which wheat was at a high price was confined to arable land, the distress in the manufacturing districts restricting the demand, and, therefore, lowering the price of meat and other produce.

APPENDIX D.

THE FARMER OF KENT.

"*The League*," *Oct.* 14*th*, 1843.

I.

GOOD Farmers, give ear, for this tale is for you,
And it's one, as you'll find, not too strange to be true—
It relates to a Farmer of Kent,
Who complained to himself, as he walked out one day,
"Here I've toiled many years on this cold hungry clay,
And what money I had that's not melted away
Will soon all be swallowed in Rent."

II.

Then he went to his Landlord, and "Landlord," quoth he,
"That farm on the hill has well-nigh ruined me,
For my capital's nearly all spent;
What to do with that soil, in these times, I can't guess,
And the truth is, I'm now in that state of distress,
That unless you are willing to take one-half less
I never can pay you your Rent."

III.

"Worthy Farmer," the Landlord replied, "understand
That the one thing we want is Protection for land—
We must keep foreign corn out of Kent;
Come with me to the poll, vote as I shall advise,
And then open your month (but be sure close your eyes),
And what good things will drop in you'll see with surprise,
But pray say no more about Rent."

IV.

The Landlord was civil, the Farmer obeyed,
With his help a monopolist member was made,
And straightway to Parliament sent;
Laws were passed to decree that the poor man might die,
But that food from abroad should no starving wretch buy,
"And yet," said the Farmer, "no better am I,
For my profit goes always in Rent."

V.

But in vain to his Landlord again he complained,
The Landlord said, knowing his object was gained,
"You may quit if you can't be content;
As to lowering your farm, that's all fiddle-de-dee,
(Then aside) Don't you wish you may get it?" said he,
"Protection, you fool, was intended for me,
And its use is to keep up my Rent."

VI.

"Well-a-day," said the Farmer, "let those laugh that win,
But I'll not be a second time so taken in
By monopolist Landlords of Kent;
Try an old bird with chaff, and to catch him you'll fail,
I now see through the juggle of Peel's sliding scale—
Protection's a cheat, and the end of the tale
Is—the Corn Laws mean nothing but Rent!"

INDEX.

"Adequate" Duties, meaning of term, 84 *n.*
Agricultural Conference (1892), xiii
Agricultural Distress (1815–21), 16–28; (1833), 32–43; (1836–44), 59–63
Agriculture, Board of, its inquiries in 1816, 10
Agriculture, Commons' Committee on (1814), 5; (1821), 17–28; (1833), 32–42; (1836), xxxiv, 43–53
Agriculture, Lords' Committee on (1833), 43–53; (1836), xxix
Agricultural Depression and Currency, xxiv, xxxiv
Allotments, 2
American Farmers injured by Protection, 85 *n.*
Artisans under Protection (1842), 55, 56
Assignats, Rapidity of their Depreciation, xxx
Assize of Bread in the Middle Ages, xvii; in Marseilles (1892), 79 *n.*

Bakers and Municipality of Marseilles, 79 *n.*
Balance Sheet of a Farmer (1819–20), 25; (1845), 69, 70
Bank of England Notes, xxiv–xxxiv
Bank of England, Policy of, xxxi, xxxii
Bastiat, viii
Beet Growers in France, 94
Bimetallists, Agricultural, Arguments of, xxiv–xxxiv
Bounties, Operation of, 86, 87, 90–93
Bounties on Wheat, History of, 86, 90
Bread, Price of in England and France, 30 *n.*
Bread, Price of, under Protection, xiv–xxiii
Bullion Committee (1810), xxxi.
Bullion Committee (1819), xxviii
Burke on Scarcity, 1
Burke on the Application of Commercial Principles to Agriculture, 96

Caird, Sir James, 76, 80, 86
Canadian Farmers injured by Protection, 85 *n.*
Cash Payments, resumption of, xxxiii
Chaplin, Mr., viii, 86, 87, 88, 90
Churchill, Lord R., viii, ix
Cobden, Richard, v, 57, 58, 63, 70
Cobden Club, xi, xxxvi
Commons' Committee on Agriculture (1814), 5; (1821), 17–28; (1833), 32–42; (1836), xxxiv, 43–53
Conservatives, their adoption of Protection, ix, xiii
Consumer pays Protective Duties, 79
Co-operative Agricultural Distribution, xxxv
Corn Laws (1804), 5; (1815), 12–28; (1829), 29; (1842), 61
Corn Laws force up Rents, vi, 51–53
Corn Laws, Review of the, 64, 99, 100
Currency and Agricultural Prices xxiv–xxxiv

Distress in 1804, 5; in 1814, 8, 10; in 1821, 17–24; in 1827, 30; in 1833, 33–43; in 1836, 43–53; in 1842, 55, 60; in 1836, 44, 59; in 1845, 63
Distress, Law of, 1–3

Economist, The, xxiv *n.*, xxx, xxxi *n.*
Enclosure Act, the General (1845), xxxiv
Everett, Mr., M.P., on Agricultural Depression and Currency, xxiv

F.'s, The Three, xxxv
Fair Trade League, x
Farmer not benefited by Monopoly (1815–22), 26
Farmers' Balance Sheets (1819–20), 25; (1845), 69, 70
Farmers' Failures, Statistics of, 1, 45
Farmers' Losses (1795–1816), 10, 11
Farmers' Losses (1792–1836), 41, 42, 50
Farming, High, xxxv
FitzWilliam, Lord, xxxi, 14, 15, 16
Fluctuations of Prices under Corn Laws, 29
Free Trade in Corn, earliest change of opinion as to (1822), 25–28
French Labourers underfed, 82 *n.*
French War, the Great, 4

German Corn Law (1885), Injurious Effects of, 83 *n.*
Gladstone's, Mr., Irish Land Act, xxxiv
Grenville, Lord, his Protest against the Corn Law of 1815, 12–14
Guyot, M., on the French Corn Law and Prices, 79 *n.*

Hardenberg, 3

Herring Fishery Bounties, 90
Holland, Commission on Land Tenure in, xxxv
Hops, Lord Salisbury and Duties on, 89 *n.*

Incendiarism in 1816, 24
Incendiarism in 1833, 39; in 1836, 47

Kent, The Farmer of, 101, 102
King, Gregory, his Law, xxv, 76 *n.*

Labourer, The Agricultural in 1851, 81
Labourer, Deterioration of, 1815–22, 22
Labourer, Protection a Differential Tax on the, 77
Landlords expect Higher Rents under Protection, 12 *n.*
List, Friedrich, opposed to Protection to Agriculture, 95 *n.*
London, Resolution of Common Council of (1842), 60
Lowther, Rt. Hon. James, 3
Lowther Family, probable gains of, under Protection, 64, 65

Malthus on Protection to Agriculture, 27 *n.*
M'Kinley Tariff, xxiii, 85
Manufacturers, Protection of, the real object, 82
Meat, Fall in price of, under Protection, 21; Rise in price of under Free Trade, 76

Napoleon, vii, 4

Oxford, Conservative Associations at, ix

Pauperism and the price of Wheat, 8, 9, 73
Peel, Sir Robert, vi, 61, 63
Physiocrats, The, 27 *n.*
Poor Rates and Agricultural Distress (1814), 7–9; (1815–22); 22–24; (1832), 36; (1833), 36, 38
Prices, Effect of Protection on, xiv–xxiii
Prices, Tooke's History of, xxxiii, 76 *n.*
Prices, Violent fluctuations of, under Protection, 29
Profits, How affected by Bounties, 91–94
Protection and Manufactures (1842), 55, 56
Protection and Peasant Proprietorship, 53
Protection a tax on the Farmer, 70
Protection, its effects on Farmers' Profits, 65–70
Protection, its effects on Wages, xiv–xv
Protectionist meetings, ix, x, xiii
Prussia, Peasant proprietors in, 3

Rents and Agricultural Distress (1804), 5; (1814), 7; (1821), 19, 20; (1833), 40; (1836), 49–53
Rents, How affected by Bounties, 91–94
Rents, Recent fall in, 1, 2
Rents, Rise in, after 1795, 19, 20, 97
Revenue, How affected by Protection, viii, 87
Ricardo on Bounties, 86, 91; on the comparative productiveness of Agriculture and Manufactures, 27 *n.*
Ripon, Lord (1846), 64 *n.*
Rogers, Thorold, 74 *n.*
Roscher on Agricultural Depression 6, 76; on the comparative productiveness of Agriculture and Manufactures, 27 *n.*
Russell, Lord John, proposes a Fixed Duty, (1841), 61

Salisbury, Lord, 89 *n.*
Scotland, Rise of Rents in (1795–1814), 11
Scottish farmers, xi
Sliding Scale carried by Sir R. Peel (1842), 61
Smith, Adam, on Bounties, 86, 90; on Free Trade in Corn, 60; on the productiveness of Agriculture, 27 *n.*
Stanley of Alderley, Lord, on Protection, x
Statistics of recent fall of Rents, 2; of rise of Rents in Northumberland (1793–1815), 97; in Scotland (1791–1840), 98
Summary of propositions, 94, 95

Tariff, Difficulties of constructing a Protectionist, 88–90
Taxation no part of cost of Agricultural production, 6 *n.*
Tooke's "History of Prices," xxiv, xxv, xxviii *n.*, xxxiii

United States, Retaliation upon recommended, ix; their Tariff advantageous to British farmers, 83

Villiers, Right Hon. C. P., 9

Wages, Agricultural, in France, 75 *n.*
Wages, how affected by Protection, xiv, xv, xvi, 9 *n.*, 74 *n.*, 78 *n.*
Wages maintained by Intimidation (1822–1833), 39; (1830), 46, 47
Wages paid out of Poor Rates (1833), 37
Weavers, Effect of Corn Laws on, 74, 75 *n.*
Welsh farmers in 1843, 59
Wirth on Commercial Crises, xxxiii

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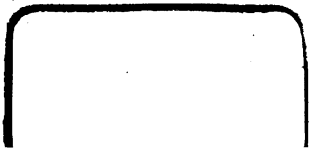
Printed by CASSELL & COMPANY, Limited, La Belle Sauvage, London, E.C.